



School of Social Work
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SOCIAL WORK IN ACTION

Spring 2021





Celebrating achievements and creating new hope for the future

Dear Friends of the MSU School of Social Work,

Spring is here and with it some verdant hope for opportunities to connect again. After a year of online learning, we are hopeful that we can resume in-person classes this fall. We are looking forward to a bustling campus, classes engaged in active experiential learning, field placements providing essential services in person, and reconnecting with the larger community and our alumni in continuing education.

Despite the challenges that this year has presented, the School of Social Work continues to grow and innovate. Both students and faculty have received prestigious awards this year. We have engaged in an exciting pilot program using virtual reality, and we have developed a new graduate certificate in Human Services Management. In this edition of *Social Work in Action*, you will also see how our Field office managed the

changes presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and how we are making some changes to the MSW Program. Student achievements are highlighted in awards, student spotlights, and descriptions of the immigration advocacy efforts undertaken in SW 822 with **Dr. Pilar Horner**.

A particular source of pride for the School is our research mission: conducting and disseminating high quality research that improves the well-being of the most vulnerable in society. One of our current areas of research strength is around violence and violence prevention. The work of several of our violence researchers is featured in this edition.

Please join me in congratulating our 2021 graduates. We are so proud of our 56 BASW and 185 MSW graduating students. They are strong, creative, empathic, and forward-

thinking learners. Throughout this past year, they have shown us their resilience, passion, and ingenuity as they have lived our values of innovation, excellence, inclusivity, caring, and integrity. We celebrate their accomplishments and are so proud to soon be calling them MSU School of Social Work alumni.

Your support of the School is greatly appreciated. I hope you will take a moment to consider the multiple ways that you can make an impact on our continued success.

Best wishes,

Anne K. Hughes, PhD, LCSW
Director
School of Social Work
Michigan State University

Cheryl Williams-Hecksel is awarded *MSU Distinguished Academic Staff Award*



The MSU School of Social Work is thrilled to announce that **Cheryl Williams-Hecksel**, senior clinical instructor in the School

since 2003, has been awarded the *Michigan State University Distinguished Academic Staff Award* for 2021.

Williams-Hecksel's contributions are exemplary in the areas of advising, curriculum development, outreach, engagement, and teaching. She has been instrumental in the development and implementation of several training initiatives that have ensured that Michigan social service agencies, and the social work students who train at those agencies, are highly skilled in the treatment of trauma. She is also part of a national learning collaborative on implementation science and consultation with field agencies around their capacity to be evidence-based and trauma-informed.

One of her recent accomplishments has contributed to clinical excellence in the treatment of survivors of sexual assault. She has worked tirelessly to expand one of our most important offerings, the Evidence-Based Trauma Treatment (EBTT) Certificate, into treatment of adult survivors of sexual assault. This certificate previously focused solely on trauma in children. The EBTT Certificate provides MSW students with specialized coursework, training in an evidence-based practice model, and a specialized field placement with a field instructor who has experience implementing this model. This is one of our more highly enrolled certificates with close to 200 students completing it since its inception in 2011.

Dr. Anne Hughes, director of the School, said, "Cheryl is an

extraordinary leader, colleague, teacher, and advocate who epitomizes the values we hold dear in social work. Through her long-term contributions to the University, the State of Michigan, and the country, she shares the vision of excellence at Michigan State University with all she encounters. She is a superb ambassador for our land-grant mission. Throughout her career at MSU, Cheryl has provided exceptional contributions and is a worthy recipient of the *Distinguished Academic Staff Award*."

Williams-Hecksel is often called on to share her expertise in trauma through continuing education offerings. She has developed and delivered many trainings for social workers across the state, always with excellent ratings. She is highly sought after as a professional trainer and is also a revered teacher. She consistently receives high student ratings, evidenced by SIRS scores above the average, and students who request her courses again and again. She is regularly cited as one of the reasons students remain in social work and pursue graduate degrees in social work.

Julie Navarre, director of Field Education stated, "Ms. Williams-Hecksel has been instrumental as a member of the School of Social Work's Field Team. Her entrepreneurial spirit and creativity are invaluable to our field education models, policies, and procedures. Her career demonstrates long-term excellence and exceptional contributions to MSU and beyond that improves the well-being of diverse and vulnerable individuals, families, organizations, and communities."

Upon learning of the award, Williams-Hecksel said, "I am so honored to be nominated by my colleagues at the School of Social

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Dr. Anne Hughes
Director
MSU School of Social Work



Work and recognized by the University. Working at the School of Social Work has been the highlight of my career, and I appreciate that I have had the opportunity to contribute to the important work of our students, graduates, and community agencies."

“Dr. Riebschleger’s open-mindedness, attention to detail, and loyalty to the University have endeared her to her colleagues and students.... Her skills, knowledge, willingness to help others, and dedication to our University and the community inspire me.”

Erin Kramer
BASW student



Dr. Joanne Riebschleger honored for her outstanding research



On March 31, 2021, the Associated Students of Michigan State University (ASMSU) honored **Dr. Joanne Riebschleger** with the *2021 Outstanding Research Award*.

Dr. Riebschleger is the director of the PhD Program in the MSU School of Social Work and an active researcher in the field of mental health and youth education. Her research led to the Youth Education and Support (YES) Program—a curriculum dedicated to delivering comprehensive mental health education materials to youth through engaging discussions, educational workshops, and assessments. In addition to this, she has accumulated a massive wealth of knowledge to create accessible mental health resources to youth in the website mwhiteens.org.

Former MSU PhD student **Dr. Daniel Cavanaugh** said, “Joanne has been continuously involved in mentorship programs for undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral students. Joanne supervises students every semester and has maintained a multi-level research team to teach students about mental health literacy and mental health literacy research. She has participated in and mentored students in the Provost’s Undergraduate Research Initiative, The University Undergraduate Research and Arts Forum, and Graduate Assistantships every semester. In addition to supporting young people in their acquisition of knowledge in how research is conducted, she also mentors students in how to present research. Joanne has facilitated the development of opportunities for her students to attend research conferences in Michigan, Florida, Colorado, Switzerland, and Australia.”

Current BASW student **Erin Kramer** said, “Dr. Riebschleger’s open-mindedness, attention to detail, and loyalty to the University have endeared her to her colleagues and students. She is a champion for higher education with a tireless commitment to serving youth and the social work student community. She made a difference at our University, exemplified the mission of the University, and has positively impacted the field of youth mental health accessibility. Her skills, knowledge, willingness to help others, and dedication to our University and the community inspire me.”

PhD student Kathryn Irish recipient of *Kiser Endowed Scholarship for Returning Adult Students*



MSU School of Social Work PhD student **Kathryn Irish** was recently awarded the *Hazel and Karen Kiser Endowed Scholarship for Returning Adult Students*. Karen Kiser appreciates the unique challenges adults face when they return to college to pursue an undergraduate or graduate

degree while maintaining a balance within their own families. It is Kiser’s desire to provide resources that may ease the financial burden of returning to college to make a better life for the recipient and their family.

“Upon learning of the award, Kathryn Irish said, “As a parent of multiples (twins) and as a student dually

enrolled in the Social Work PhD Program and the Medical Neuroscience Graduate Certificate program (Department of Natural Science), I am absolutely thrilled to receive this scholarship.

“This award provides support that will allow me to engage in more research and related activities this year. It also provides flexibility, which means I will be able to dedicate more time to making scholarly contributions and putting my ideas into action. Additionally, having this support and flexibility will allow me to engage in more School activities centered on racial and social justice.

“I am so grateful. I intend to make the most of this wonderful opportunity by learning and growing as much as I can.”

Shavonna Green awarded *Excellence in Community Engagement Scholarship*



Shavonna Green, a graduate student in the Master of Social Work Program at Michigan State University, recently received the MSU

commendation for *Excellence in Community Engagement Scholarship* for her work on “Criminal Justice Reform: Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration.” She was formally recognized at the 2021 Michigan State University Outreach and Engagement Awards Ceremony on February 24, 2021.

Within the School of Social Work, Shavonna Green is in the Advocacy Scholars program, which is a competitive scholarship and intensive training program for MSW students pursuing careers in social policy and social change. She also currently serves as an intern at the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan (ACLU), where she works on their Smart Justice Campaign. This campaign aims to end mass incarceration and eliminate racism within the criminal legal system.

Through her role on the ACLU’s Smart Justice Campaign, Green has advocated for the expansion of stakeholders, inviting new community partners to the table to

ensure that the Campaign’s goals are representative of constituents’ needs and perspectives from different parts of the state. One of the partners that Green advocated be invited to participate in the Campaign was the National Association of Social Workers–Michigan Chapter (NASW–MI). She now serves as the liaison between the ACLU and NASW–MI. Her initiative in building this inter-organizational partnership has created a tremendous opportunity for the voices of mental health providers in Michigan and the individuals they serve to help shape criminal justice policy reform within the state.

One of the largest initiatives that the Smart Justice Team embarked on was introducing 18 bills during the last two weeks of the legislative session. Green arranged constituent meetings with Michigan legislators so team members could express their opinions and share relevant personal experiences related to these bills. She trained constituents on how to host legislative/advocacy meetings and how to use data and personal experiences to express the need for new criminal justice policies. At the conclusion of the 2020 Legislative Session, all 18 bills, decriminalizing several misdemeanor offenses to civil infractions, eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for certain minor offenses, and discontinuing sending individuals to jail for driving offenses

unrelated to safety, were passed in the Michigan House and Senate. These bills were signed into law by Governor Gretchen Whitmer during the first week of January 2021.

Dr. Sacha Klein, associate professor and Green’s Advocacy Scholars advisor said, “Shavonna’s work with the ACLU has been impactful not only for this community partner organization and for her own learning and professional development, but also for the entire state. Moreover, she has done an excellent job representing the University and strengthening the School’s relationship with this community partner. The relationships she has built have led to new partnership opportunities between the School of Social Work and the ACLU-MI. For instance, Shavonna helped facilitate a structured dialogue between this year’s cohort of Advocacy Scholars, the ACLU-MI political director and the ACLU-MI policy counsel that helped our Scholars learn more about potential career opportunities in policy advocacy, principles of effective lobbying, and several of the ACLU’s current campaigns. Thanks to the doors that Shavonna has helped open, our School looks forward to a continued partnership with the ACLU–MI, including opportunities for community-engaged scholarship.”



2021 Student of the Year

Amanda Loucks, MSW student, was awarded *Student of the Year* from the Michigan Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-MI). This award recognizes social work student leaders who have shown outstanding academic achievement, organizing efforts, student involvement, and a commitment to the *NASW Code of Ethics*. NASW–Michigan was honored to wrap up the 2021 Social Work Month (March) by recognizing the outstanding students nominated from across the state with a virtual awards ceremony on March 31. *Congratulations, Amanda!*



“Violence tends to escalate as the intimate relationship gets serious. Early actions are critical, detecting and intervening in any violence happening at any stage of the relationship.”

Dr. Hyunkag Cho
Associate Professor



Intimate partner violence perpetrators: Who are they?

A recent analysis of the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) reveals six types of intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrators and their deteriorating effects on survivors’ health.¹ The NISVS collected data in 2010 from about 20 thousand adults in the U.S.²

Six types of perpetrators

Many perpetrators commit multiple types of violence such as psychological aggression, physical violence, coercive control, sexual assault, and stalking. An analysis of various combinations of such violence perpetration proposes six distinctive perpetrator types:

- Molester
 - Humiliator
 - Predator
 - Manipulator
 - Bully
 - Stalker
- (see Figure 1)

Predators may be the worst, using a variety of violence types all together, while other types tend to primarily use one to three violence types. Of the six types, Manipulators and Predators are most common (see Figure 2).

Perpetrator gender

Distinctive gender differences emerge across the types of perpetrators (see Figure 3). While female perpetrators are likely to be Humiliators and Stalkers as much as male perpetrators, male perpetrators are more likely to use severe violence than female perpetrators.

Survivors’ health

Predators inflict mental and physical health problems more than all other types of perpetrators. That all types of perpetrators cause significant physical health problems suggests that survivors may suffer from more than one type of perpetrator, simultaneously or over time.

Figure 1. Six Types of Perpetrators (probability of committing a type of violence)

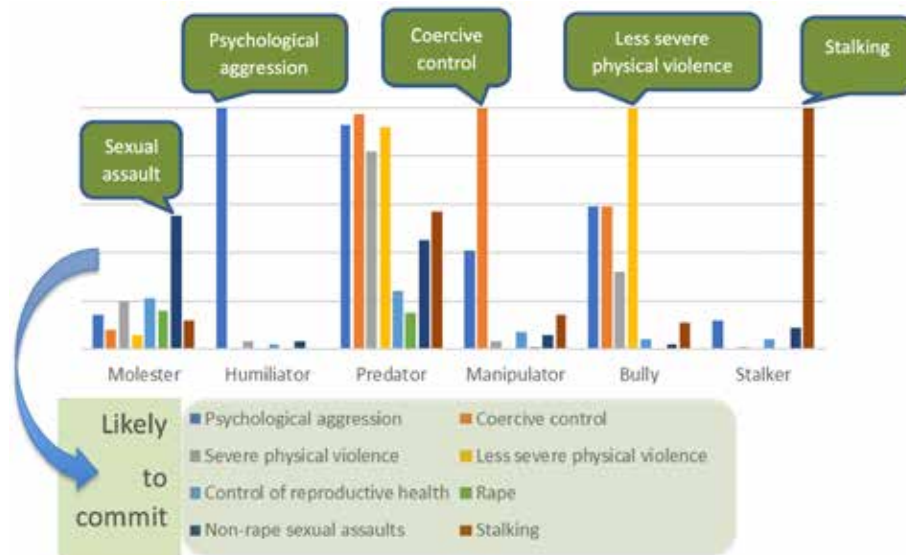
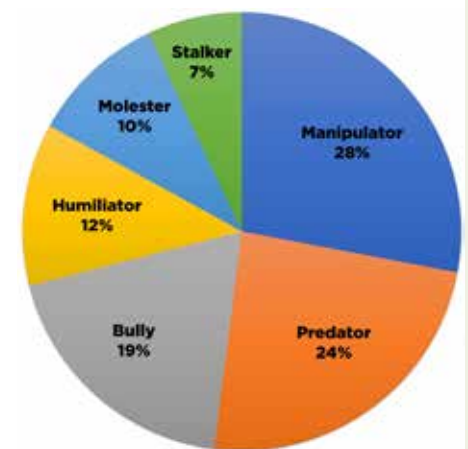


Figure 2. Percentages of Each Type of Perpetrator



Relationship status and perpetrator types

The relationship status seems to be associated with the perpetrator type (see Figure 5). Predators are least prevalent among dating partners but become increasingly prevalent in fiancé/boy or girlfriends and most prevalent among spouses and live-in partners. Humiliators, Molesters, and Stalkers are less prevalent among spouses and live-in partners than among dating partners.

This result suggests that as the relationship becomes serious and/or committed, developing from dating to cohabiting to marrying, IPV may escalate. If this is true, interventions in IPV at the early stages of the intimate relationship may be crucial to prevent and/or reduce further, potentially serious, violence.

In conclusion, IPV perpetrators tend to commit more than one type of violence, with males using more severe violence than females. Violence tends to escalate as the intimate relationship gets serious. Early actions are critical, detecting and intervening in any violence happening at any stage of the relationship.

¹This study was conducted by **Dr. Hyunkag Cho** and doctoral students in the School of Social Work at MSU (**Abbie Nelson, Jennifer Allen**) and **Dr. Woojong Kim** from the Social Work Department, University of Michigan–Flint. Contact Dr. Cho for more information, chohyu12@msu.edu

²See the CDC website for more information of the NISVS, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/datasources/nisvs/index.html>

Figure 3. Gender across Perpetrator Types (% per gender category)

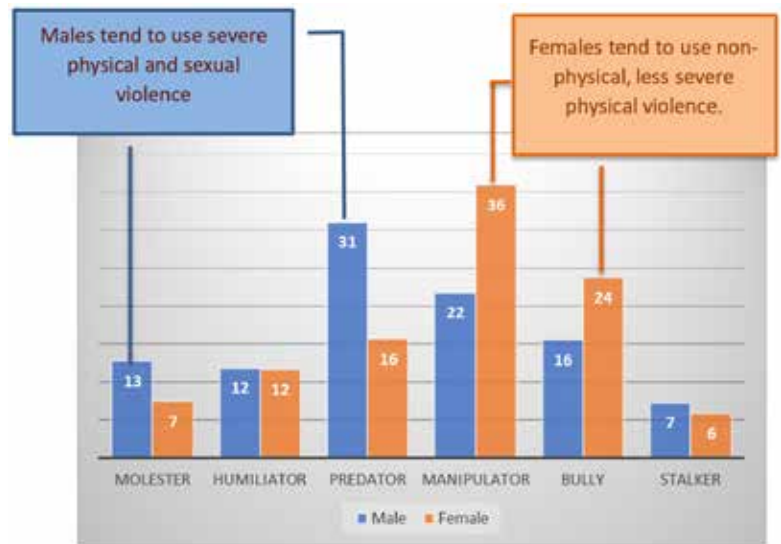


Figure 4. Survivors' Health across Perpetrator Types (% per perpetrator type)

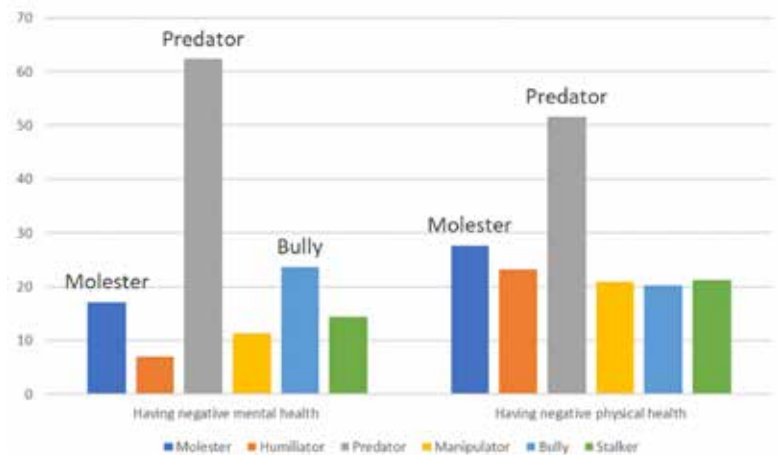
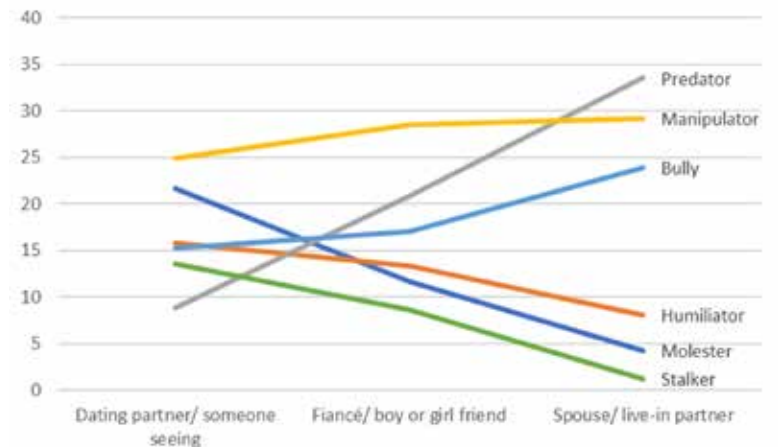


Figure 5. Relationship Status and Perpetrator Types (% per relationship status)



Research on coerced debt, an understudied form of intimate partner violence

I am collaborating with **Adrienne Adams** (PI, Ecological–Community Psychology, MSU) and **Angela Littwin** (College of Law, UT–Austin) on a research study on coerced debt, funded by the National Science Foundation. The project is supported by a large team of graduate students, including two MSU School of Social Work PhD students, **Betsy Meier** and **Jessica Saba**.

Coerced debt is an important but understudied form of intimate partner violence (IPV). It occurs when abusive partners use fraud or coercion to generate debt in their partners' names. For example, an abuser may fraudulently incur a car loan in their partner's name or force them to make credit card purchases or take out a student loan.

Preliminary evidence suggests that coerced debt is a common problem with damaging effects on the lives of women with abusive partners. It can burden victims with hundreds or thousands of dollars in debt and damage their credit ratings, thus creating barriers to employment, housing, and utility services.

These debts and barriers may be associated with long-term economic

harm in large part because victims of coerced debt have difficulty attaining effective help from the two relevant legal systems: divorce law and debtor-creditor law. Despite these potential impacts of coerced debt, the research remains in its infancy.

Our project is the first in-depth study of coerced debt. We seek to answer fundamental questions and build theory about how coerced debt operates in abusive relationships, how victims seek and attain legal help for coerced debt, and coerced debt's effects on women recovering from an abusive relationship.

We are using a sequential mixed-method longitudinal design to collect data from a sample of women in Texas recently divorced from an abusive partner, recruited via publicly available divorce records (120 women with coerced debt and a comparison group of 60 without).

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, all of our data collection is being conducted virtually. We are interviewing participants about their experiences with IPV and coerced debt; these interviews are structured by the life history calendar and draw on participants' credit reports.

The quantitative data will be used to investigate: (1) The types and amounts of coerced debt incurred in victims' names, tactics abusers use to incur it, and how victims learn of fraud; (2) Differences between abusive relationships with and without coerced debt; (3) The extent to which help for coerced debt is available, accessible, and acceptable through divorce and debtor-creditor law; and (4) The extent of coerced debt's economic effects in the three months after an abusive relationship ends.

Additionally, we are beginning in-depth follow-up qualitative interviews with a subsample of 20 participants in order to gain a deep, nuanced theoretical understanding of how victims of coerced debt experience it in the broader context of abuse, facilitators of and barriers to attaining help through the divorce system, and the process by which coerced debt shapes victims' lives.

In addition to publishing scholarship, we will be partnering with the Center for Survivor Agency and Justice to disseminate the findings to policy makers, service providers, and attorneys, with the goal of ensuring that interventions to address coerced debt are evidence-based.

“Coerced debt can burden victims with hundreds or thousands of dollars in debt and damage their credit ratings, thus creating barriers to employment, housing, and utility services.”



Dr. Angie Kennedy
Associate Professor



Adrienne Adams



Angela Littwin



Betsy Meier



Jessica Saba

I Care a Lot: Elder Abuse Prevention Project funded by the Department of Justice

Since most of us have been spending more time inside recently, you may have come across the new thriller/comedy from Netflix, *I Care a Lot*, starring Golden Globe Winner Rosamund Pike. In what Netflix describes as a dark thriller, “a court-appointed legal guardian defrauds her older clients and traps them under her care. But her latest mark comes with some unexpected baggage.” Eerie, right? The central theme in the film, financial abuse of elders, is the subject of **Dr. Fei Sun**’s current research project: *The Prevention of Financial Abuse among Elders with Cognitive Decline in Rural Michigan*.

Financial abuse or fraud is one of the most frequent forms of abuse occurring to older adults. Those living with cognitive impairment are the most vulnerable because of their diminished capacity in judgment and executive functioning.

The aim of this project is to prevent financial abuse by providing community service professionals, family caregivers, and persons with cognitive decline with the education, support, and skills needed to address

risk factors for financial abuse of persons with cognitive impairment or dementia living in the community.

Through educational sessions, participants in Manistee, Marquette, and Battle Creek, MI, will receive training on dementia and risk factors of financial abuse and fraud in dementia care settings, skills to interact with Adult Protective Services (APS), and materials on financial abuse prevention. These trainings will provide basic knowledge of dementia and financial abuse and help caregivers and elders to gain the ability to identify and respond appropriately to potential threats to financial well-being.

The project is a collaborative effort between faculty and graduate students at Michigan State University and Arizona State University across social work (**Lucas R. Prieto**, PhD Candidate), sociology (**Dr. Zhenmei Zhang**, and **Brittany Tucker**, JD), and criminology and criminal justice (**Dr. Xia Wang**) disciplines. The APS of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has provided instrumental support to the development of training materials.

“Financial abuse or fraud is one of the most frequent forms of abuse occurring to older adults. Those living with cognitive impairment are the most vulnerable because of their diminished capacity in judgment and executive functioning.”

Dr. Fei Sun
Associate Professor



If you are interested in participating in the project, please contact **Project Coordinator Katie Donovan** at katie@bestwaywithwords.com or (517) 242-7355.

If you suspect someone you know is a victim of Elder Abuse, please contact the **APS Statewide 24-hour Hotline** at 888-444-3911.

Social work training meets virtual reality

“Using virtual reality training has only recently emerged in social work, compared to the virtual reality and simulation training associated with such high-risk professions as pilots and military and police professionals. The MSU School of Social Work invested in a pilot program: licensing virtual reality equipment from Accenture.”

Dr. Gary Anderson
Professor



Erica
Shifflet-Chila



Gretchen
Sheneman



Recruiting, orienting, training, and retaining a competent workforce in the field of child welfare is serious business. Social workers and other child welfare professionals are responsible for investigating reports of child abuse and neglect, assessing the safety and well-being of children, and potentially removing children from their parents temporarily or permanently. Training professionals typically relies on classroom teaching methods or shadowing veteran workers in the course of their work in the community. Classroom role-playing and case discussions lack authenticity, and shadowing provides limited exposure to family circumstances and minimal responsibility for assessing family strengths and risks.

To improve training, MSU School of Social Work engaged in a virtual reality training pilot project. Using a 23-minute virtual home visit, with real people and voice-activated conversations, trainees interviewed a mother, her boyfriend, and her 7-year-old daughter to assess risk of abuse and neglect. The participant is given three questions to choose from and pose one to the family member. The next questions flow from the previous questions, so there can be literally thousands of different conversation pathways. At the end of the scenario, the trainee is forced to make a decision to place the child in foster care, or not. The trainee then must announce the decision to the anxious mother.

Why virtual reality?

The goal is for trainees to experience a realistic workplace scenario in which professionals and trainees can practice their skills and take risks while working in a challenging environment. In our experience, rather than having an avatar or simulated experience, the virtual reality technology provides interaction with real humans and the potential for thousands of variations

in that communication. It is immersive—in our case, a 360-degree experience in a neighborhood, approaching and entering the home, and interviewing family members in their living room.

The purposes include:

1. As a novel experience for most, it introduces an element of fun and play into the training experience, which increases engagement and investment in learning.
2. This cognitive and emotional complexity and novelty help create a memorable experience, which leads to greater retention of learning.
3. This immersive experience can expose new professionals to higher-risk scenarios in a more realistic manner than classroom training and a safer manner than exposure to high risk in the field.
4. Examining the virtual reality scenario may highlight unconscious racial and other bias better exposed when examining interview questions and hard-to-detect nuances, reflecting on one's feelings and judgments, and examining the basis for making decisions.
5. By creating a learning experience that is so immersive, intense, and realistic, it leads to empathy and increased understanding of the job that needs to be done.

Virtual reality technology is not intended to replace traditional training methods. It is intended to supplement and enrich the training experience. As novel and engaging as the headsets and technology can be, the essential learning takes place in the debriefing, analysis, and guided conversation following the virtual reality experience.

Using virtual reality training has only recently emerged in social work, compared to the virtual reality and simulation training associated with such high-risk professions as pilots and military and police professionals.

The MSU School of Social Work invested in a pilot program: licensing virtual reality equipment from Accenture.

Through this agreement with Accenture, we developed an innovative partnership with the State Court Administrative Office of the Michigan Supreme Court, the Michigan Federation for Children and Families, and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to explore and test this training strategy. Accenture had developed a realistic scenario for Children's Protective Services (CPS) workers (guided by professionals in the field) and created an immersive experience by using high quality technology and human actors rather than avatars.

COVID-19 necessitated individual sessions, very small groups in socially distanced and masked settings, and mailing headsets to individual homes and debriefing via Zoom. In four weeks, 75 individuals experienced the virtual reality scenario and debriefing. Although the majority of trainees were social workers, the participants included attorneys, police officers, teachers, judges, Michigan Supreme Court justices, and a range of non-social workers.

Participants' comments included:

- This is a great experiential learning tool that allows one to feel the challenges but not worry about making a mistake. It provides the setting in which questions will come up and can be answered in a safe setting and one that will not have negative repercussions for the family that is subject to the CPS home visit.
- The VR training provided a realistic opportunity to train new staff or existing staff. The choice of questions allows staff to understand the impact of the types of questions that are used with families. Using this in a team or group setting and then debriefing was extremely helpful.



- The ability to prepare for uncomfortable situations BEFORE getting into them.
- The ability to notice bias and the impact of personal experience and the way it can interfere with decision making.
- This experience can give students a sense of what working in the field is actually like. I think this would be a great tool for social work students who have not entered the field yet. It would teach them how to ask questions and make tough decisions.

The opportunities to use the tool and experience as the starting point for a discussion are almost endless. This includes gaining knowledge and skills on how to assess safety, how to document and articulate case facts and information, how bias impacts decision making and interactions, engagement skills with families, and how to interview parents and children in a child protection case.

When asked, "What did you like most about the training?" participants said:

- The realism of the experience. I have been to homes like that!
- Through the debriefing experience, I learned how much

the form/tone of my question choice influenced the answers, which then influenced my ultimate decision.

- After completing the exercise once, I wanted to do it again, changing the form/tone of my questioning to see what changes that provoked in the answers and my ultimate decision.
- I liked how real the experience felt. I have never worked in a child welfare setting, and this experience gave me more respect for what they do.
- The realistic nature of the scenario, being able to look around and see the context of the home, feeling like you were really interacting with the family in a meaningful way.

The partnership team will be exploring how to use virtual reality in classrooms and training experiences in the year ahead. This is all complicated by COVID-19, but MSU is hopeful that there will be at least a partial return to in-person training in the year ahead. Based on our pilot experience, there is more to learn, but adding virtual reality technology to training continuum is promising.



MSW STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Alexandra Etzin

MSW '21

How has your experience in the Evidence Based Trauma Treatment Certificate (EBTT) program influenced the way you conduct therapy with children?

My first field placement as an MSW student was at MSU Safe Place. It wasn't until I worked with the children of my clients there that I even knew I wanted to work with kids. I had very little experience with children and didn't know much at all about how to provide therapy services to children. When I decided to pursue the childhood trauma track of the certificate program, I was a bit nervous but excited.

As the year progressed, I felt much more confident in my abilities to provide therapy to children with histories of trauma. My internship has provided me with an opportunity to work one-on-one with survivors of childhood sexual abuse. I was terrified at first that I was not going to be able to help these kids. But every therapy session, every consultation call, every seminar, has helped me to become a better therapist. I graduate in two months, and I feel that I have the knowledge, the training, and the confidence to make a difference in the lives of the children I serve. I definitely have the EBTT Certificate program to thank for that!

COVID-19 brought about teletherapy and the many challenges that come with virtual environments. This led you to create Ms. Allie's Virtual Therapy Tools. Tell us more about that and what plans you have for the future. At the beginning of the school year, I was really trying to figure out a way to make teletherapy interactive for my clients (some as young as 5 years old). Using Google Slides, I created what looked like a virtual play therapy office. I made every 'toy' (clipart) in the room clickable so it would lead to a virtual activity, worksheet, game, etc.

Since I use TF-CBT with my clients, I created a different 'room' for each component of the model. After beginning to use the digital resource with my clients, I noticed an immediate improvement in engagement. Clients were excited to participate in therapy and looked forward to exploring a new therapy room each week.

I had no intention at first to turn this into a business. EBTT Certificate Coordinator Cheryl Williams-Hecksel encouraged me to put my name on it and put it out there, so that's what I did! I had no idea how many people would be interested in tools like this.

The response I got was overwhelming! After posting about my virtual therapy office on a couple social work Facebook pages, the messages began pouring in! Everyone was dealing with similar struggles—low engagement and low motivation with teletherapy clients.

I now have nine virtual therapy offices and six virtual therapy activities available for purchase on my website, and I create custom offices for people all over the world! The growth of my business happened so quickly, it's kind of a blur. I never thought I'd be a small business owner at 23 years old, but I'm rolling with it!

Even post-COVID, I think teletherapy will continue to be an option for a lot of therapists and clients, and I think that's a good thing! While many people will prefer to receive in-person services when it's safe to do so, teletherapy growing in popularity means increased accessibility for folks in rural areas, those without reliable transportation to and from appointments, people with disabilities, etc. That's my ultimate long-term goal with my virtual therapy tools—to make therapy more accessible and interactive for everyone, not just those who have the resources to attend in-person.

Now more than ever, the future has so many unknowns, which is pretty scary for someone about to graduate and enter the 'real world'! Post-graduation, I hope to continue the work I'm doing with Ms. Allie's Virtual Therapy Tools while also working toward my LCSW.



Relaxation room

Eating disorder recovery support room





BASW STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Caroline Khombe BASW '21

How does social work differ in the U.S. from your home country, Malawi? For Malawi, social work is more about community building through educating people on the damage stereotypes and stigma create and then creating approaches to unite people in the communities. Unfortunately, mental health is an issue often ignored in my country. Not only are people stigmatized and seen as insane for seeking any mental health support, it is rare to even find professionals who effectively offer support to people struggling with mental health issues.

The American society might not be completely comfortable with talking about mental health as an issue, but it has worked hard to make people and communities acknowledge that it exists. I want to learn how Malawian communities can get to the point of recognizing that caring for our mental health is essential and encourage more people to go into professions that normalize talking about mental health.

Have any instructors had a particularly strong impact on you? Spring 2018 I took my Social Work 200 class with Instructor Glenn Stutzky. Then MSU was strained with all the changes the Nassar case had brought onto us as a community. Instructor Stutzky made sure the class was introduced to what a social worker is as well as understand how we could start our journey as social workers and support our friends. I remember him telling the class that we had all the potential to contribute to shaping what we wanted the School to look like regardless of what our individual interests were.

Yes, we were introduced to how social work became a profession in America and all the influence it had. We also learned how to be support systems for communities, how to advocate for what we believe in, and how to be involved in the planning of future policies that affect our lives. Instructor Stutzky would go the extra mile to offer extra credit to encourage the class to attend the meetings and conferences that MSU was having at the time. He told us to speak if we had the chance, ask questions, offer a shoulder to a friend, and anything else we felt could help. That class taught me that being a social worker is dynamic, and my dedication to serve will never be limited to being a case manager, advocate, or an educator. I can be so much more, and I'm grateful for Instructor Stutzky for giving me and my classmates a chance to practice different aspects of the profession.

What has been the most challenging aspect of your academic career at MSU? I'd say being an international student definitely made my college experience a little difficult. I moved from being in a country where everyone is Black to a country where I was racially minor, and it forced me to confront identities I thought never really mattered to how I see myself. Many times, I felt out of place because everyone could tell from how I speak that I was not American.

I also was never caught up on the social issues and history of the country, so I had to research most of the examples mentioned in class. Even the corny professor jokes never made sense until later. I'm glad I

“Instructor Stutzky made sure the class was introduced to what a social worker is as well as understand how we could start our journey as social workers and support our friends. I remember him telling the class that we had all the potential to contribute to shaping what we wanted the School to look like regardless of what our individual interests were.”

Caroline Khombe

had that experience despite how uncomfortable it made me, I am at a point in my journey where I am aware of how different environments can affect me and how I can adapt and thrive without assimilating.

Do you have any advice for students currently enrolled in a social work program? Your field work will be a chance for you to see what people are doing to support communities. Be open to learn, and you will discover interests you never thought you'd have.



Taylor committed to helping others

Bezil Taylor graduated with a Master of Social Work degree in 2020. A student activist

committed to making change on campus, he spent his career as a student fighting for social justice and working to end student homelessness. Now, Taylor continues his commitment to helping others, working as a continuum of care coordinator with the Services to End and Prevent Homelessness for Montgomery County.

Where did you grow up, and what initially brought you to MSU? I grew up in Detroit, MI. I'm a graduate of Detroit Public Schools. I came to MSU after being admitted through onsite admissions at my high school. I was a 2004 member of the Broad College of Business Summer Business Institute. After that, I was sold on MSU. I came back for my Master in Social Work in 2018.

What is your favorite MSU memory? My favorite memories of MSU span both my undergraduate and graduate experiences. As an undergraduate, my favorite memories consist of the moments that I grew to be close with my best friends. Those moments led to our growth as individuals, being groomsmen in weddings, and just a plethora of shared times as we grew from young adults. As a graduate student, my favorite moments are all the times that I saw our community come together in the interest of raising awareness around youth and student homelessness on college campuses. Watching my baby sister graduate from undergrad at MSU while I was in my MSW Program—most proud moment!

How did you choose your major? Initially, I was a general business administration pre-law major. After struggling with math courses and being introduced to the Adolescent Diversion Program by its director, Sean Hankins, I found a home in the psychology department.

How did MSU/your degree help shape your career path? My psychology degree, and more specifically the Adolescent Diversion Program, provided the ground work and baseline of empathy and advocacy that led me to work with youth since I first graduated. Also, outside of academics, being a Black young man in East Lansing and at Michigan State University showed me how the world views people like me. Recently, a study detailed the disparate frequency of law enforcement stops that Black and Brown people experienced versus White people in the city. It lit a fire in me to figure ways to support folks who have been historically systematically and systemically harmed in our communities. I also witnessed myself and peers struggle to graduate, including some friends not being able to finish

their degree. I view solving issues that face students who come from impoverished communities as a personal charge.

What is your favorite part about your current job? What is the most challenging part? The best part about my current job is I get to work with people who understand the impact that homelessness has on the greater community. Solving homelessness among my peers is about being decent people, and not just “cleaning up where we live.” Providing pathways to housing and coordinating services and teams of people to give everyone a chance at housing and a future is very rewarding. The most challenging is convincing people that they should care about people experiencing homelessness. Recently, we are experiencing people die of COVID-19, and that breaks my heart. It also motivates me to keep going and advocate to the highest level to keep those numbers as low as possible.

What excites you the most about your career? What is your dream job (if you're not working there already), and what are some of your long-term career goals? Knowing that I can be a spark that creates lasting change is the best thing I have ever experienced. I love knowing that the work that I am privileged to do provides life-altering support for people during their lowest moments.

What volunteer/community work have you done since graduating? Why are these things important to you? My job is basically community work, but I have worked on a few projects, one in the MSU School of Social Work. The Racial and Social Justice Collaborative in the School is a new entity focused on supporting racial equity both internal and external to the School. I was lucky enough to be a part of the team that developed the Collaborative. I also am a member of a Police Reform Task Force with Texas Southern University's Center for Justice Research. The task force is working to make meaningful police reform policy change on a national level.

What is the best thing about finishing your education? What do you miss the most about being in school, and what do you miss the least? I miss being close to my friends the most. We were a family who supported each other during both our brightest and darkest days. That support still exists, but I definitely feel the distance between us.

What advice do you have for current students, as far as choosing a major and finding the right career path? Take your time, use your resources, and ask for help when you need it.

New certificate focused on macro organization and community leadership student development

The School has developed and will be launching the first certificate specifically for macro/OCL students. **The Human Services Management (HSM) Certificate**, offered by the MSU School of Social Work in partnership with the **Network for Social Work Management (NSWM)**, is designed for students interested in expanding their knowledge and skills in leadership and management in human services. Skill development is concentrated in four main categories:

- Executive leadership
- Strategic management
- Resource management
- Community collaboration

The HSM Certificate will serve as a career-long endorsement, and a testament of the recipient's skills to future employers and partners.

NSWM initiated the Human Services Management Certificate in 2015. MSU School of Social Work joins other large universities, like University of Michigan and Arizona State University, which have also partnered to provide this competitive edge in learning, skill development,

and employability. MSU School of Social Work is now one of only 20 universities across the United States that are approved providers of this certificate.

The vetting and application process to become an approved provider includes cross-mapping current coursework with the core competencies set by the NSWM. MSU School of Social Work's macro/OCL coursework closely aligns with these competencies and skill expectations and exceeds the minimum requirement for partnership.

The HSM Certificate research and development has been completed in partnership with the OCL Sequence Committee and student intern **Amanda Loucks**. Loucks has brought an important student perspective to all development components, including program detail, marketing, and evaluation. The intended purpose of the HSM Certificate is to provide an intentional course of study and extra endorsement for students who really want to focus their post-graduate career on leadership and management in human services.



The intended purpose of the HSM Certificate is to provide an intentional course of study and extra endorsement for students who really want to focus their post-graduate career on leadership and management in human services.

Kelly Blanck
Clinical Instructor
OCL/Macro
Sequence
Chair

Amanda Loucks



For more information:

If interested in more information, please contact Certificate Coordinator Kelley Blanck, LMSW, at kblanck@msu.edu.

Network for Social Work Management: <https://socialworkmanager.org/>



MSU MSW program options

One of the hallmarks of the School of Social Work at Michigan State University is our commitment to bringing high-quality graduate education to communities throughout the state. We have been providing distance education in a variety of forms for over 40 years. We offer a fully accredited Master of Social Work (MSW) Program in different ways to fit the needs of our students and have two advanced areas of specialization: Clinical Practice and Organization and Community Leadership (OCL).

EAST LANSING

Students on the East Lansing campus can complete either the Regular MSW Program or the Advanced Standing Program. Both full-time and part-time schedules are available.

The **Regular MSW Program** is 57 credits. A full-time schedule is 2 years; part-time is 3 years.

Our **Advanced Standing Program** is for those who have received a BSW from a CSWE-accredited program within the last six years and have at least a 3.25 GPA. This program is 38 credits. A full-time schedule is 1 year; part-time is 2 years.

FLINT

Students in Flint complete the Regular MSW Program through either a full- or part-time schedule. Classes are in the evening 2-3 times a week at Mott Community College. Starting with the fall 2022 cohort, there will also be a Flint Advanced Standing option.

STATEWIDE BLENDED

Students in the Statewide Blended option complete either the Regular or Advanced Standing program through a unique blend of face-to-face instruction, videoconferencing, and online learning. Students visit the East Lansing campus for a few days each summer for face-to-face instruction, peer support, and career development. This is a part-time option only. To be eligible, students must live more than 30 miles from East Lansing and, if out of state, live within 50 miles of the Michigan border.

Statewide Blended and Weekend options provide a unique combination of distance and online learning, along with high impact face-to-face interactions doable for working professionals with busy schedules.

WEEKEND

Students in the Weekend option take classes through a blend of face-to-face weekend sessions and online learning. This is a part-time Regular

MSW option only. Weekend sessions are held once a month at the James B. Henry Center in Lansing.

OAKLAND

Students in Oakland complete the Advanced Standing Program through either a full- or part-time option. Classes are held on the Oakland University campus in Rochester, MI.

MID-MICHIGAN

This Advanced Standing Program is hosted at Mott Northern Tier campus in Clio, MI. It will be moving to Flint beginning with the fall 2022 cohort.

Students in our **MSW Program** are assigned a **Graduate Advisor** and a **Field Coordinator**. Both of these professionals are master's-level social workers and provide support and guidance for students throughout the program. Our **Field Team** places hundreds of students in agency and other field placements throughout the state, drawing on our wide range of community partnerships and connections.



Change coming soon: Mid-Michigan to merge with Flint

The **MID-MICHIGAN ADVANCED STANDING MSW PROGRAM** welcomes its final cohort to the Mott Community College Northern Tier campus in Clio this summer. We will begin accepting applications for the **NEW FLINT ADVANCED STANDING MSW PROGRAM** when applications open September 2021. Students entering the Flint Advanced Standing Program will begin classes in summer 2022 at Mott Community College in Flint where our current Flint program has resided since 2001.

MSW certificate programs

The MSU School of Social Work currently offers ten **certificate programs** at the MSW level:

- Addiction Studies
- Chance at Childhood
- Child Welfare
- Clinical Social Work with Families
- Combat Veterans
- Evidence Based Trauma Treatment
- Human Services Management
- Levande Program in Gerontology
- School Social Work
- Social Work in Health Care

Our certificate programs include intensive coursework and related field education to give students the knowledge and experience to excel in specialized professional environments after graduation.

While obtaining a certificate is an internal process within the MSU School of Social Work, certificate holders may hold an advantage in certain fields due to the specialized course curriculum and field placement experience.

General information about our certificate programs and the application process can be found at <https://socialwork.msu.edu/programs/MSW/certificate-programs/>.



SW 822 Immigration projects develop advocacy for immigrant populations

“Despite the constraints of COVID, graduate MSW students have linked with community members from across the United States to address issues related to immigration including: changing presidential administration’s policies, violence against undocumented women, and sexual and gender minority health.”

Dr. Pilar Horner
Associate Professor



In the face of growing animosity across the developed world toward outsiders and nationalist political campaigns in Europe and the United States, successful policy and social interventions will need to engage with a complex mix of concerns citizens in many locations have about immigration policy and integration politics.

Those opposed to immigration or refugee resettlement invoke a variety of arguments that are remarkably similar across locations. These arguments include concerns that immigrants who cross borders without permission are engaging in an illegal activity; that asylum seekers may be fleeing poverty rather than persecution; or that immigrants and refugees represent an economic or cultural threat to local populations (Hochschild 2018).

Social work educators are well positioned to train the next generation of leaders to address these pressing issues.

At MSU, students in **Dr. Pilar Horner’s** Social Work 822 Immigration course work together to integrate class learning with

advocacy by presenting workshops/simulations, discussions, and panels as final projects.

Despite the constraints of COVID, graduate MSW students have linked with community members from across the United States to address issues related to immigration, including: changing presidential administration’s policies, violence against undocumented women, and sexual and gender minority health.

This experiential course helps to build a group of student learners/advocates that are prepared to engage with the major issues of immigration; to address issues of diversity and inclusion; to infuse evidence-based research with practitioner work to improve cross-cultural understandings; and to provide the MSU community with powerful events that can engage often polarizing discourses about immigration.

Events are featured this year via online web formats and will occur in April 2021. To see the full schedule, visit phorner.populr.me/msusocialworkimmigration2021



Emmanuel Chima, now a student in our PhD Program, during his SW 822 presentation in 2019.

Combatting Domestic Violence for Undocumented Persons

Monday, April 12, 2021
12:00pm-1:00pm

This advocacy project illustrates the barriers that undocumented people face as they seek protections for issues of domestic violence within the United States. Policies are in place for undocumented populations, but it is our mission to address barriers and loopholes that prevent safety.



Tiffany Denison



Emily Erickson



Nichole Frazier



Sarah Gardner



Megan Luczak

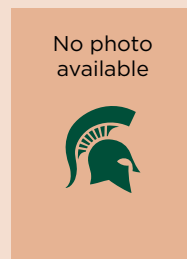
Care Can't Wait: Immigrant Women's Access to Healthcare



Hannah Joseph is a second-year clinical track MSW student graduating in May and plans to work in the school systems as a middle or elementary-age school social worker.



Kayla Kreutzer is a second-year MSW student graduating in May and hopes to go on to work with survivors of trauma.



Keeleigh Mahler is an Advanced-Standing MSW student graduating in May with the hopes of joining an organization addressing trauma as it relates to children and families.



Maddy Lepore is a second-year MSW student graduating in May and will be residing in Virginia after graduation to start her career at a behavioral health center.

Friday, April 9, 2021
12:00pm - 1:00pm

We are bringing awareness and fundraising for immigrant women and their lack of access to sexual healthcare as well as the detrimental impacts this can have. We are hoping to empower the community about this issue through a community event via Facebook Live.

The Road to Citizenship: A Simulation

A link for participation in our simulation will be made available during the week of April 8-15, 2021.

We will be exploring and raising awareness about the immigration process amidst a changing presidential administration. Our project is simulation-based case studies that explore the process of immigration through varying perspectives.



L-R: Annie Dykstra, Kennedee Semans, and Erinna Toodzio are all Advanced Standing MSW clinical students with interests in school social work.

“I am grateful to be fulfilling my generalist field placement at an elementary school under the supervision of an amazing, seasoned School Social Worker. Among many other opportunities, I have participated in the IEP process for students in special education, implemented behavior, social skills, and crisis interventions, and gained experience working with a diverse group of students. The MSU Field Team has worked meticulously to seek out meaningful field placements with experienced MSWs, provide support to field instructors, and extend grace and alternative learning opportunities to students amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the volatility of the pandemic, my field placement has needed to shift to a virtual environment on two occasions. Knowing the MSU Field Team is armed with virtual learning opportunities has given me peace of mind that I will fulfill my field placement and receive valuable learning experiences.

“Additionally, the MSU Field Team has gone above and beyond in assisting me as I contemplated my clinical field placement. As I questioned an additional school social work or a medical social work placement, my MSU Field Coordinator, Caitlin Rogell-Jones took time to speak with me about the two areas and potential benefits to my MSW career path. In addition, she connected me with a medical social worker currently serving as a Field Liaison, who graciously talked to me about medical social work and my future as an MSW. These conversations helped me fully take advantage of my field placements, broaden my learning experiences, and better prepare me for my MSW career.”

Michelle Byers
MSW Student



Julie Navarre
Director, Field Education

Field Education adapted with creativity, flexibility

When MSU moved all courses online in March 2020, we had to quickly transition our field education program into something quite different. Many students had to move to remote learning. Agencies and students were stressed about this while figuring out how to provide services. Field education responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with creativity and flexibility.

The Field Team worked with schools and field education consortia nationwide to compile a comprehensive list of alternative remote internship activities. We provided this list to our field constituents across more than 350 partner agencies. We created an optional assignment titled “Analysis of COVID-19: Through the Lens of the 9 Social Work Competencies.” Students had to analyze and summarize the impact COVID had on a community or their placement agency using the social work perspective. This assignment was shared on CSWE’s field director’s listserv and was adopted by schools in at least 23 states.

We reached out to community partners and faculty about short-term supplemental learning opportunities that students could engage in immediately. By August 2020, we had developed cutting-edge virtual field modules for students and liaisons to use to supplement learning across the curriculum’s competencies. During the fall semester, 75 students/liaisons used these modules. Finally, we purchased simulations so students could practice and develop interpersonal skills.

We collaborated with community partners to create learning opportunities for students while also supporting communities in need. For example, we worked with the Red Cross, the United Methodist Committee of Relief (UMCOR) and other universities to serve those impacted by the 2020 floods that occurred in Arenac, Gladwin, Saginaw, and Midland counties to assist recovery efforts. One student is assisting case managers to reach out to the residents affected by the catastrophic flooding. Efforts are underway to further aid the long-term recovery process.

CSWE’s new employment-based placement policy allows students to use their job tasks as field activities

if the tasks have clear links to the nine social work competencies. We adopted this change to support our students and to reduce stressors and financial burden many experience.

Finally, we met monthly with field instructors and liaisons to answer questions about MSU's COVID-19 policies, provide support, and engage in dialogue about systemic racism and social injustices. These monthly meetings have been well attended, averaging about 50 people.

A huge thank you to our community partners who've made this possible! We look forward to our continued partnership to prepare students to be competent and ethical social workers.



Top row: Julie Navarre, Leisa Fuller, Caitlin Rogell-Jones
Middle row: Rebecca Wiersma, Nicki Moody, Parryss Carter-McGee
Bottom row: Cheryl Williams-Hecksel

Congratulations, Class of 2021!

You earned this.

Social Workers Will. Spartans Will.



School of Social Work
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Recent faculty publications

- Earle, M. & **Freddolino, P. P.** (in press). Meeting the practice challenges of COVID-19: MSW students' perceptions of E-therapy and the therapeutic alliance. *Clinical Social Work Journal*.
- Woolham, J., **Freddolino, P. P.**, Gibson, G., & Daniels, S. (in press). Telecare at a crossroads? Finding researchable questions. *Journal of Enabling Technologies*.
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- Coker, A. L., Bush, H. M., Clear, E. R., Brancato, C. J., **McCauley, H. L.** (2020). Bystander Program Effectiveness to Reduce Violence and Violence Acceptance within Sexual Minority Male and Female High School Students Using a Cluster RCT. *Prevention Science*. 21: 434-444.
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Invest in initiatives meaningful to you

Students enter the profession of social work with a strong commitment to service, integrity, and competence. As social work educators, we believe that the good our graduates do is multiplied and extended across generations, and we are honored to help prepare them for their service.

In keeping with land-grant principles of education, research, and outreach/service, we take seriously our

responsibility to the education and training of students as well as outreach for community engagement.

If you share our values, please consider supporting these efforts with a gift to one of the scholarship and endowment funds highlighted below. A full list of giving opportunities and links to donate online can be found at <https://socialwork.msu.edu/alumni/endowments.html>.



Robert Little Scholarship Fund

This fund provides scholarships for graduate students with a career interest in child welfare, with preference for those who want to work in kinship care.



Dr. Mary Bremer Barron Scholarship Fund

This fund supports scholarships for students, with preference for those from the greater Flint community.



MSW Veterans Scholarship

This fund supports veterans by providing scholarships for study in the MSW Program.



Paul P. and Donna K. Freddolino Endowment for Distance Education

This fund supports the School of Social Work's distance educational programs, including both student support and the development of new educational technologies.



The School of Social Work Endowed Fund

This fund provides a range of supports for the School, including student scholarships, support for faculty research, and support for School programs.



Future Leaders Endowed Scholarship in Social Work

This fund supports graduate students through scholarships, assistantships, or fellowships.



Gary R. Anderson Endowed Fund for Child Welfare Leadership

This fund supports workshops, lectures, and scholarships in the School related to child welfare leadership and workplace development.



Chance at Childhood Endowment Fund

This fund supports research, education, training, and outreach concerning intervention and treatment for at-risk children and families; children's justice; coordination of professionals dealing with at-risk children and families; and methods of encouraging children and youth to develop into well-adjusted, capable, and productive adults.



Youth Education and Support

This fund helps build, test, and disseminate research focused on real ways to increase child and youth access to accurate, non-stigmatized knowledge of mental illness and recovery.



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