

AREA OF EMPHASIS IN PRACTICE WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES (AEIR)

Master of Social Work

What is social work practice with people of immigrant and refugee backgrounds?

Social work practice with people of immigrant and refugee backgrounds takes into consideration the factors associated with voluntary and forced immigration. For many, the immigration process is characterized by trauma, grief, and isolation. Social workers empower individuals, families, and communities to successfully resettle in a new country and to rebuild meaningful and productive lives. Social workers support initiatives that foster more welcoming communities for new arrivals. Social workers need to be skilled in cross-cultural care and leadership that supports the mental health and well-being of people with immigrant backgrounds across their lifespan.

Why is this area of social work practice important?

Nations are becoming increasingly diverse and social workers will find themselves working with people of immigrant and refugee backgrounds, their families, and their communities in many professional settings – both domestically and internationally. People in these communities have unique needs and challenges, which can be effectively addressed by social workers who are knowledgeable, sensitive, and responsive to their needs.

The School of Social Work has developed opportunities for MSW students to explore their interest in working with people of immigrant and refugee backgrounds, their families, and their communities. These include the Area of Emphasis in Social Work Practice with Immigrants and Refugees (AEIR) Scholars program and elective courses specific to practice with these populations.

Components of the AEIR Experience:

Networking and Collaboration:

AEIR involves community members, alumni/ae, students, and faculty members in a dialogue about practice with people of immigrant and refugee backgrounds, both domestically and internationally.

Building Knowledge:

Scholars develop their skills and deepen their understanding of the context and unique needs of people with immigrant and refugee backgrounds, their families, and communities with courses, course assignments, and campus and community events.

Required Electives:

Required elective courses that support clinical practice with immigrant and refugee communities.

Research:

AEIR scholars will contribute to the body of knowledge in this area of social work practice by focusing a variety of course assignments on topics related to people of immigrant and refugee backgrounds, their families, and their communities. Additionally, students may build their professional portfolios by taking part in research opportunities within the university and/or at conferences.

Practice:

Scholars gain hands-on experience working with people of immigrant and refugee backgrounds and their families applying social work values, knowledge, and skills during their field practicum(s).

Leadership:

AEIR scholars assume leadership roles on the AEIR advisory council, guide the development of group service and academic projects, and represent this unique area of social work practice in the School of Social Work, on campus, and in the professional community.

Tuition Remission:

AEIR scholars receive a tuition remission of \$1,000 in their last semester of the program.

Traudt Family Scholarship:

AEIR scholars from immigrant or refugee communities are eligible to apply for up to \$5,000 annually thanks to a generous gift from the Traudt Family.

Mentorship:

Students receive personalized mentoring in areas such as accessing scholarships, professional portfolio development (including résumé building), career exploration and guidance, and opportunities for continuing education post-graduation.

AREA OF EMPHASIS IN PRACTICE WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES (AEIR)

Frequently Asked Questions

Why consider an Area of Emphasis (AE) Scholars program?

The AE Scholars programs focus on emerging practice areas and provide additional networking, collaboration, and leadership opportunities for those interested in these critical areas.

Who can apply to AE Scholars programs?

AE Scholars programs are designed to be at least two-year experiences. All newly admitted Advanced Standing (AS) and Regular Standing (RS) MSW students are eligible to apply. Other students who have at least two years remaining in their MSW program and who meet the requirements of the program may also apply during the spring application period. Students apply to the AE program after acceptance to the MSW program.

How competitive is it to be accepted to the AE Scholars programs?

Applicants need to articulate and demonstrate relevant qualifications and professional goals, and a limited number of students are accepted each year.

Can I apply to more than one AE Scholars program?

You may apply to more than one AE Scholars program; however, you may only be selected for one.

Learn more about Social Work Practice with People of Immigrant and Refugee Backgrounds



Tonya Horn, MSW, PhD, LISW

Assistant Professor and AEIR Coordinator

Email: thorn@stthomas.edu

Phone: (651) 962-5815

stthomas.edu/socialwork/immigrants-refugees