

AREA OF EMPHASIS IN AGING (AEA)

Master of Social Work

What is gero-social work?

Gero Social Work embraces the vital contributions of older adults including their historical perspectives, shared wisdom, and the mosaic of life experiences they bring. Incorporating an integrated whole person health perspective, social work practice with older adults focuses on maintaining and enhancing the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual quality of life of older adults. It takes into consideration the important familial, cultural, community, economic, spiritual, and societal factors present. Social workers provide vital services for older adults and their families, such as counseling services and interdisciplinary care coordination, caregiver support, and advocacy. Social workers in this field work in settings such as government agencies, hospitals, hospice, long-term care, and outpatient and or primary care clinics.

Why is this area of social work practice important?

Demographics changes have created an enriching opportunity for social workers to pursue careers in aging. By 2030, all Baby Boomers will be older than 65, and one in five US residents will be of retirement age*. Also, at this time for the first time in history, Minnesota's 65+ population is expected to eclipse the population of individuals age 5-17†.

To meet this growing opportunity, the School of Social Work has developed the Area of Emphasis in Aging Program for MSW students interested in working with older adults with the skills necessary to be prepared and competitive in this job market.

Components of the AEA Experience:

Networking and Collaboration:

AEA involves community members, alumni/ae, students, and faculty members in a dialogue about practice with older adults and their families.

Building Knowledge:

Scholars deepen their understanding of aging across populations and develop skills to work on interdisciplinary teams that address the unique bio-psycho-social-spiritual needs of older adults and their families. Some examples of skill building activities include completing the Whole Person Healthy Aging Microcredential, participating in interprofessional healthcare simulation labs, and participating in community-based training opportunities in specific interest areas (e.g., palliative and hospice care, behavioral health care, or chemical health).

Required Electives:

Students take two elective courses that will support clinical practice with older adults and their families.

Leadership:

AEA scholars assume leadership roles on the AEA 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.

Research:

AEA 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 older adults and their families. Additionally, students build their professional portfolios by taking part in research opportunities within the university and/or at conferences.

Internships:

Scholars develop hands on practice skills working with older adults and their families during their internships in settings such as county or government agencies, hospital care-management, hospice, palliative care, home care, long-term care, bereavement services, behavioral health, addiction services, and caregiver supports.

Tuition Remission:

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

Mentoring:

Students receive personalized mentoring in areas such as accessing scholarships, professional portfolio development, career exploration and guidance, continuing education post-graduation, and ongoing alumni engagement.

*US Census Projections, 2017
†MN State Demographic Center, 2018

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Frequently Asked Questions

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

The AE Scholars programs focus on emerging interprofessional 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 one year 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 older adults:



link.stthomas.edu/AEA



Age-Friendly
University
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