

Master of Social Work

Stipend Project

The Master of Social Work (MSW) stipend project is designed to provide information about the capabilities and competencies of people with developmental disabilities to graduate social work students. Each year, the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council will select up to eight highly qualified students to complete their practica at agencies that provide programs and services to people with disabilities.

Eligibility criteria – Each applicant must be a currently enrolled graduate social work student at the University of Oklahoma. Preference will be given to students who have previous experience working with people with developmental disabilities or have any unique life experiences involving people with disabilities.

Background

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) states that the profession of social work is committed to the enhancement of human well-being and to the alleviation of poverty and oppression (Curriculum Policy Statement for Master's Degree Programs, p.2). Social workers nationwide provide many of the services aimed at improving the lives of persons in need. Quite often, people with developmental disabilities remain unserved or underserved because they often lack the resources and support necessary to fully participate in community life.

Social workers are also trained to work with diverse populations. The CSWE requires that master's degree programs provide "content about social work practice with client systems of various sizes and types" and "prepare graduates to work with diverse populations." People with developmental disabilities comprise a significant population of people who might come in contact with social workers. With many people with disabilities as beneficiaries of a variety of government programs, social workers in public human service agencies often have significant contact with people with disabilities.

The School of Social Work at the University of Oklahoma (OU) is the only university in Oklahoma offering the Master of Social Work (MSW) degree. Offered at both its Norman and Tulsa campuses, the MSW degree prepares social work students for professional social work careers. The curriculum at the OU School of Social Work offers coursework in generalist social work practice as well as advanced courses in specialized fields such as geriatric practice and administration.

Although all accredited programs offer coursework addressing "diverse" populations, the social work curriculum at OU includes only one course that specifically addresses people with developmental disabilities. The course, "Social Work for Children with Disabilities" (SWK 5010/4010) is not part of the core curriculum. Moreover, an adjunct faculty member teaches this course on an irregular basis.

Deadlines – Spring 2010 stipend application deadline is December 3, 2009 at 5 p.m.

How to apply – This program accepts paper applications only. The application form may be obtained by contacting:

Rick Barcus
Planning and Grants Management Director
Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council
2401 NW 23rd Street, Suite 74
Oklahoma City, OK 73107
Phone: (405) 521-4965
Toll-free: (800) 836-4470
Email: Rick.Barcus@okddc.ok.gov

Program description

The MSW Stipend Project is designed to give experiential learning opportunities in the field of disabilities to graduate social work students. The students selected will complete their practica at agencies that provide programs and services to people with disabilities. Agencies should provide challenging, well-supervised practica that will give students the opportunity for community involvement and/or a major role in planning or implementing a special project.

Each agency must require the student to work a minimum of 240 hours in order for the student to receive the maximum stipend of \$2,500. The Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council will pay the student as provided under the conditions of a professional services contract. Students receiving the stipend may not be paid for sick time, personal time off, or travel reimbursement. ODDC funds may not be used to purchase computer software, equipment, meeting costs, student books or tuition. A student may complete his or her practica at many agencies but the student may only receive the ODDC stipend once.

Duration of the practicum

Students participating in the MSW stipend project may begin their practica during the fall or spring semester. Students may work any duration between 12 and 16 weeks.

Practicum location

With assistance from the ODDC and the OU School of Social Work, students selected for the stipend project will complete their practica at organizations that provide programs and services to people with disabilities. Each agency will provide a brief description of its programs and services and specify the activities in which the proposed student(s) will participate. Some examples of practicum activities include: intakes screenings, linking individuals to

community resources, providing casework services to families, and professional development. Each practicum location is expected to provide office and/or desk space and access to computers, telephones, copiers, etc. The practicum coordinator from the OU School of Social Work must approve the practicum location before the practicum begins.

Practicum coordination

The following components are considered essential to a successful practicum:

- an assignment that either closely matches a student's career goals or has broadly applicable learning experiences;
- an assignment to a special project or a distinct set of ongoing responsibilities that develops professional and/or technical skills;
- an orientation that is complete and thorough;
- effective supervision of the student and mechanisms that help the student recognize how social workers assist persons with developmental disabilities.

Eligibility criteria

Each applicant must be a currently enrolled graduate student at the OU School of Social Work (Norman or Tulsa campus). Preference will be given to students who have previous experience working with people with developmental disabilities or have any unique life experience involving people with disabilities. Before the practicum begins, each student must obtain and provide the ODDC with written enrollment verification from OU confirming his or her enrollment status. Students receiving financial support from the Department of Human Services Title IV-E program are not eligible for this stipend.

Selection criteria

The practicum agency will hire and supervise the student. The ODDC will consider the following criteria in the course of the application review process:

- the applicant's potential to build inclusive communities;
- the applicant's interest in a career in disabilities (as evidenced by the applicant's resume);
- a written personal statement;
- two letters of recommendation (one from a faculty member and one from an individual with whom the applicant has known or worked)

Portfolio requirements

Each student will be responsible for preparing a portfolio, a compilation of student's work throughout the practicum. The student, the practicum coordinator, and the ODDC liaison will have the opportunity to review the progress and contents of the portfolio throughout the practicum as an indicator of growth, knowledge and experience. A copy of this portfolio must be submitted to the ODDC within 30 days of the completion of the practicum.

The portfolio must contain the following information:

- the student schedule for the semester of the practicum
- field practice acceptance agreement
- teaching learning agreement
- job description
- weekly activity logs for each week in the practicum
- documentation of professional interactions with individuals and/or their families
- an overview of the organization, i.e., its mission, programs, structure, staffing
- an analysis of the organizations policies including recommendations for change or the development of policies for a new program
- a proposal for the development for a new program or service (including a needs assessment, goals, objectives, implementation plan and a method for evaluating its effectiveness)
- self-assessment including areas of increased competence and areas in need of improvement
- compilation of the community resources for the community in which the practicum was located

Evaluation plan

During this project, ODDC members and staff will work to develop a set of process measures that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. If continued evaluation is necessary, ODDC staff will evaluate the program with assistance from the OU School of Social Work.

ODDC staff and the practicum coordinator from the OU School of Social Work are expected to have the capacity to collect information on the activities of the student before, during, and following the practicum. This information will be used to determine if the stipend has been successful in giving social work students a broader understanding of the abilities and needs of people with disabilities.

Technical assistance

The ODDC will provide the direction and technical assistance for this project. The Director of Planning and Grants Management will provide program oversight and monitoring of this project. The Comptroller will be the fiscal monitor for this project. Final application guidelines with complete instructions will be available by July 31 of each year. Members of the ODDC Project Development Committee will select the students for this stipend.