Master of Social Work (MSW) Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for your interest in the **Cal State LA Master of Social Work (MSW) Program**. The following frequently asked questions provide helpful information about our program options, admission requirements, field education, financial opportunities, and the application process.

1. What MSW program options are available, and how long does each program take?

Cal State LA offers **three MSW program options** to accommodate students with different academic backgrounds and scheduling needs:

11-Month Advanced Standing Program (ASP)

The 11-Month Advanced Standing Program is designed for qualified applicants who have earned a BASW degree within the last five years.

- **Program Length:** 11 months / 3 semesters
- **Units:** 33 semester units
- **Location:** Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA) Campus
- **Start Term:** Summer
- **Class Schedule:** Summer classes are held three days per week for four weeks. Fall and spring classes are held all day on Mondays and Tuesdays.
- **Field Internship:** Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays for a total of 24 hours per week

Traditional Two-Year MSW Program

The Two-Year MSW Program is a full-time, four-semester program that combines graduate coursework with field education.

- **Program Length:** 2 years / 4 semesters
- **Units:** 60 semester units
- **Start Term:** Fall
- **Class Schedule:** Classes are held all day on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- **Field Internship:** 16 hours per week during the first year and 20 hours per week during the second year

Traditional Three-Year MSW Program

The Three-Year MSW Program allows students to complete the 60-unit MSW curriculum over six semesters.

- **Program Length:** 3 years / 6 semesters
- **Units:** 60 semester units
- **Start Term:** Fall
- **Class Schedule:** Classes are generally held one evening per week, usually Tuesday, and all day on Saturdays.
- **Field Internship:** Field education begins in the second year, with 16 hours per week in Year 2 and 20 hours per week in Year 3.

2. Is the MSW program accredited?

Yes. The Cal State LA MSW Program has been **accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1999**.

3. What is the cost of the MSW program?

The approximate program costs for the current academic year are:

- 11-Month Advanced Standing Program**:** $19,635
- Two-Year MSW Program: $19,296
- Three-Year MSW Program: $28,944

Please note that these costs are approximate and tuition and fees are subject to change upon approval by the Board of Trustees.

4. Do I need a degree in Social Work to apply to the Two-Year or Three-Year MSW Program?

No. Applicants to the Two-Year and Three-Year MSW Programs may hold a bachelor's degree in any field from an accredited college or university, provided they meet the required prerequisites.

Your bachelor's degree must be officially conferred before you begin the graduate program. Official transcripts must be submitted to the Office of Enrollment Services to verify degree completion.

5. What is the minimum GPA required for admission?

Minimum GPA requirements vary by program:

- **Two-Year and Three-Year Programs:** Minimum 2.75 GPA in the last 60 semester units or 90 quarter units
- **Advanced Standing Program:** Minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA

6. What academic prerequisites are required?

Applicants to the Two-Year and Three-Year Programs must complete three prerequisite courses with a grade of C or better:

- One elementary or introductory statistics course can satisfy the research methods and statistics prerequisite
- Two upper-division social science courses

Upper-division courses are junior- and or senior-level courses.

Applicants to the Advanced Standing Program do not have additional prerequisite course requirements, as these requirements are satisfied through the required BASW degree.

7. Do I need to complete all prerequisites before applying?

You must have completed at least two of the three required prerequisite courses when you submit your application.

All admission requirements and prerequisite courses must be successfully completed before beginning the MSW program.

8. Is the GRE required?

No. The GRE is not required for admission to the Cal State LA MSW Program.

9. Is the MSW program offered online?

No. Cal State LA does not currently offer an online MSW program.

10. Does the MSW program offer tracks or concentrations?

The Cal State LA School of Social Work does not offer separate concentrations. Instead, the MSW curriculum features an Advanced Urban Generalist focus.

This approach prepares students for professional social work practice across multiple levels, including:

- **Micro:** Individuals and families
- **Mezzo:** Groups and Communities
- **Macro:** Policy and Societal Systems

Cal State LA's urban setting provides students with opportunities to develop effective and responsive approaches for working with diverse populations and communities.

11. What are the application deadlines?

Applications are reviewed on a rolling admissions basis, meaning completed applications are reviewed in the order they are received until available spaces are filled. Prospective applicants are encouraged to apply early.

2027 Admission Deadlines:

- **Traditional Two-Year MSW Program:** January 15, 2027
- **Traditional Three-Year MSW Program:** January 15, 2027
- **11-Month Advanced Standing Program (ASP):** February 28, 2027

To be considered for admission, your application must be complete, and all required documents must be received by the applicable deadline.

12. Can I apply for admission in the spring or summer?

Cal State LA admits new MSW students only once each year.

- The **Traditional Two-Year and Three-Year Programs** begin in the **fall semester**.
- The **Advanced Standing Program (ASP)** begins in the **summer semester**.

13. How many references are required?

All MSW applicants are required to submit three references.

Two-Year and Three-Year Programs

Applicants must provide:

- One **academic reference**, such as a professor or instructor
- One **professional reference**, such as a supervisor from a paid or volunteer position
- One additional **academic or professional reference**

Personal references, such as family friends, therapists, pastors, or coworkers, are not accepted.

If you graduated more than eight years ago and are unable to obtain an academic reference, you may submit a professional reference instead. You will need to provide a brief explanation of why an academic reference could not be submitted under additional documents.

Applicants provide the names and email addresses of their references as part of the application process. Admissions will provide the listed references with a link to complete the reference form. Once the form is completed the applicant will be notified via email that the reference was submitted.

Advanced Standing Program

Advanced Standing applicants must provide three references:

- One academic reference
- One reference from an integrated seminar instructor
- One reference from an internship instructor

14. What is the university application deadline?

The university application deadlines are:

- **Two-Year and Three-Year Programs:** January 15, 2027
- **Advanced Standing Program:** February 28, 2027

Please remember that the Advanced Standing Program begins in the summer and is offered at the **Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA) campus**.

15. Can I apply to both the Advanced Standing Program and a traditional MSW program?

Yes. Eligible applicants may apply to the Advanced Standing Program and either the Two-Year or Three-Year Program.

Because these programs have different start terms and locations, applicants will be applying for **two separate admission terms and campuses**:

- **Advanced Standing Program:** Summer start at the DTLA campus
- **Two-Year and Three-Year Programs:** Fall start at the main campus

16. Do you offer Financial Aid, Stipends, or Grants?

A: Yes, our program offers seven stipends for students with specific interests. More information is available at https://www.calstatela.edu/hhs/sw/stipend-programs . ***Please be aware that you must first be admitted to the MSW program to apply for a stipend.***

I. CA Title IV-E Program (formerly CalSWEC)
The CA Title IV-E Program is for students with an interest in Public Child Welfare. The program offers a two-year stipend for students in the 2-year and 3-year programs and a 1-year stipend for ASP students. The stipend is $25,000 per year and requires a two-year commitment (1 year for ASP) to work for LA County DCFS or any of the 58-county public child welfare agencies in the state of California. CA Title IV-E funds are also available to County Public Child Welfare employees in the 3-year program. Students are reimbursed for tuition and fees, books, mileage, parking, and educational supplies. Depending on availability of funds, BASW stipends may also be available.

II. DCFS Internship Program

The DCFS Internship Program is a 2-year internship program for students interested in public child welfare. MSW students receive a stipend in the amount of $26,000 per year. Students are selected in their first year of practicum and will be placed at an agency that works with the DCFS population or those at risk. In the second year, students will be placed with DCFS. The DCFS office will be selected by DCFS; however, it may be at the Glendale, Belvedere, Corporate, or Monterey Park office.

If selected for the DCFS stipend, students are required to attend mandatory specialized seminars held throughout the school year in both the first and second years of practicum. Upon graduation, students are required to work at L.A. County DCFS for two years (or 1 year for ASP recipients).

VII. Public Behavioral Health (PBH) MSW Training Program
Funded by the California Office of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), the PBH stipend is for students interested in working in California's public behavioral health care systems, programs, and settings.

PBH stipend recipients receive funding of up to $25,000 per training year and commit to providing the equivalent of 12 months of full-time service in publicly funded behavioral health programs and settings in the state of California after graduation.

PBH is open to eligible students enrolled in all MSW program options (2-year, 3-year, or ASP) who are in publicly funded behavioral health practicum placements.

V. Ballmer Project MSW Stipend
The Ballmer Project MSW Stipend is available to students in the ASP and 2-year MSW program options who are committed to serving children, youth (up to age 24), and families in the Los Angeles area upon graduation.

ASP students receive up to $25,000, and 2-year students receive up to $21,500 per year. Unlike other stipend programs, Ballmer funding is open to the entire eligible cohort, and awards are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted.

Ballmer operates as a "last dollar in" program, meaning it can be combined with most other stipends to supplement a student's funding package.
Recipients commit to 36 months of full-time post-graduate service, which must begin within the first 12 months after graduation and be completed within the first 5 years. Students who receive both a Ballmer stipend and a Public Child Welfare, Public Behavioral Health, or, in some cases, the DMH stipend may complete their service commitments concurrently.

Students should apply and complete required steps as early as possible once admitted to an eligible Cal State LA MSW program. Funding is guaranteed to the first 120 students who accept enrollment in the 2-year program and the first 100 who accept enrollment in the ASP program.

III. Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Stipend
While funding is available, 60 stipends are allocated for MSW students in the final year of their MSW program across eligible MSW programs in Southern California. The amount per stipend is $18,500.

Students awarded a stipend will need to commit to one year of full-time, paid employment post-degree in a clinical capacity at either a directly operated LAC DMH facility or an agency contracted by LAC DMH.

If your first-year internship was in a DMH-operated or contracted agency or in a community setting (including schools) that provides public mental health care, you may qualify to apply for the stipend. You also have the option to select qualifying placements for your second-year internship that will qualify you to apply for the DMH stipend.

Once the stipend application becomes available, eligible students in the final year of the program will be notified and provided with the link to apply.

IV. Geriatric Social Work Education Consortium (GSWEC) Stipend

GSWEC is a collaboration among eight graduate schools of social work and fourteen community agencies specializing in services for older adults in the Greater Los Angeles area.

GSWEC was established in 1999 to provide aging-focused second-year practicum placements and competency-driven geriatric social work practicum education. GSWEC practicums are structured to provide social work graduate students with a well-rounded experience serving older adults.

Students in the final year of the MSW program are eligible to apply. Stipend award amounts vary between $4,000 and $6,000 depending on participating community agencies' fiscal capacity, and there is no post-degree work commitment.

VI. Aging and Adult Services (AAS) MSW Training Program
Funded by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), the AAS program is for MSW students who are committed to careers providing social work services to aging and vulnerable adults in California's publicly funded systems, programs, and settings.

The program focuses on specialized field education intended to enhance students' understanding of the needs of this vulnerable population and the agencies that serve them.

Each MSW student participant will be awarded a $25,000 stipend and is required to complete a one-year commitment upon graduation to work at an eligible agency serving older adults.

This program is open to eligible students in all three options of our MSW program (2-year, 3-year, or ASP) who are in placements serving older adults.

Please Note: Each stipend program has its own criteria, application process, and terms associated with the stipend award. Stipends are competitive and require separate applications and an interview.

17. Do I need a car and valid auto insurance to enroll in the MSW program?

A car is **not required to enroll** in the MSW program. However, practicum is an important component of the program, and students should plan to spend approximately **16–24 hours per week** at a community-based field agency, depending on their program and year.

Many field agencies require interns to have access to a car, a valid driver's license, and automobile insurance.

Practicum placements are **not guaranteed to be near a student's home**. Practicum placement may be up to 25 miles radius from the campus not from your home. Limited access to reliable transportation may restrict the number and location of field placement opportunities available to a student.

18. Can I apply if I have a misdemeanor or felony on my record?

Yes. Having a misdemeanor or felony does not automatically prevent you from applying to the MSW program.

However, applicants should be aware that field agencies may require a **Live Scan and/or background check**, and certain agencies may have restrictions regarding criminal history.

Applicants must successfully match with an appropriate field placement. If a student is unable to successfully match with an internship agency after three attempts, their MSW acceptance may be rescinded.

Prospective applicants with concerns about their ability to secure a field placement or future employment in social work are encouraged to consult with the Practicum Director.

19. What is considered social work experience?

Relevant experience may include work or volunteer experience in areas such as:

- Social work
- Case management
- Health services
- Human services

Experience supervised by a credentialed social work professional—such as someone holding a **BSW, MSW, LCSW, PhD, or DSW**—may also be considered social work experience.

20. Are services available for veterans?

Yes. The Cal State LA Veterans Resource Center provides veterans with information and support related to applying for admission to the university. Prospective students who are veterans are encouraged to connect with the Veterans Resource Center for additional information about available resources and services https://www.calstatela.edu/vets .

21. Are services available for students with disabilities?

Yes. Cal State LA provides services and support for students with disabilities through the university's Office for Students with Disabilities. Students are encouraged to contact the office for information about available resources, accommodation, and support services http://www.calstatela.edu/osd.

22. What can I do with a degree in social work?

A social work education can prepare graduates to serve individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities across a variety of professional settings.

For additional information about careers in social work and the profession, prospective students are encouraged to explore career resources available through the **National Association of Social Workers (NASW)**. https://www.socialworkers.org/Careers/Career-Center/Explore-Social-Work/Why-Choose-the-Social-Work-Profession

Want to Learn More About the MSW Program?

We invite prospective applicants to attend an **MSW Information Meeting** to learn more about:

- MSW program options
- Admission requirements
- The application process
- Practicum education
- Financial and stipend opportunities
- What to expect as an MSW student

Information sessions are offered **virtually and in person**, providing prospective students with an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the Cal State LA School of Social Work.

Saturday, September 12, 2026,	10:00 to 11:30 A.M	**https://calstatela.zoom.us/j/84460584642**
Tuesday, September 22, 2026,	6:00 to 7:30 P.M	**https://calstatela.zoom.us/j/84460584642**
Saturday, October 3, 2026,	10:00 to 11:30 A.M	In-person Main Campus in Salazar Hall room 162
Saturday, October 17, 2026,	10:00 to 11:30 A.M	**ASP Only https://calstatela.zoom.us/j/82670322751**
Saturday, October 24, 2026,	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	**https://calstatela.zoom.us/j/84460584642**
Wednesday, October 28, 2026,	6:00 to 7:30 P.M	**https://calstatela.zoom.us/j/84460584642**
Wednesday, November 4, 2026,	3:00 to 4:430 P.M.	In-person Main Campus in Salazar Hall room 162
Saturday, November 14, 2026,	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	In-person Main Campus in Salazar Hall room 162
Saturday, November 14, 2026,	1:00 to 12:30 P.M.	In-person for DCFS employees only in SH 162
Tuesday, December 1, 2026,	6:00 to 7:30 P.M	**https://calstatela.zoom.us/j/84460584642**
Saturday, December 5, 2026,	10:00 to 11:30 A.M	In-person ASP Only at DTLA Campus Open House
Saturday, December 19, 2026,	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	**https://calstatela.zoom.us/j/84460584642**
Saturday, January 23, 2027,	10:00 to 11:30 A.M.	In-person ASP Only at DTLA Campus Open House

For the latest information about upcoming sessions, program requirements, application procedures, and deadlines, please visit https://www.calstatela.edu/sites/default/files/2026%20MSW%20information_meeting_flyer%20(10-6-25).pdf

For additional campus Information please see the links below.

Cal State LA Admissions Deadlines: http://www.calstatela.edu/admissions/deadlines

Cal State LA English Language Proficiency Requirement for Admission (TOEFL):
http://www.calstatela.edu/admissions/english-language-proficiency

Admissions Office – IERF/WES: Foreign Credential Evaluation Reports http://www.calstatela.edu/admissions/ierfwes

Admissions Office – Submitting Documents: 323-343-3901 or http://www.calstatela.edu/admissions/submitting-documents

Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships: 323-343-6260 or https://www.calstatela.edu/financialaid

Application Helpline (857) 304-2087. Please be aware that they operate at an eastern standard time.

Begin Your Journey at Cal State LA

Whether you are beginning your graduate social work education or advancing your education through the Advanced Standing pathway, Cal State LA offers multiple paths toward earning your MSW.

Explore your options. Prepare to make an impact. Take the next step toward your future in social work.

Advantages of Attending Cal State LA

- Excellent education at an affordable price.
- Ranked in the top 3 Schools of Social Work in Southern California
- https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-health-schools/social-work-rankings/california
- Ranked # 60 among top social work schools nationwide by 2024 US News and World Report
- https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-health-schools/social-work-rankings/california
- *The* Washington Monthly *magazine 2022 College Guide and Rankings listed Cal State LA at number three in the "Best Master's Universities" category.*
- Individual attention to students by faculty and staff.