

University of Utah MSW Program
Application Instructions
Updated October 2018

All applications are created through ApplyYourself (AY). The University of Utah/MSW AY application and MSW application instructions undergo yearly changes and updates, so **please do not start or submit an application before August 1.**

Applications cannot be processed or evaluated until you have paid the Office of Admissions fee. This is the final step in the AY program and must be done by 11:59 pm MST on the application deadline date.

Applications submitted after the closing deadline will be reviewed on a space-available basis.

Click here for the [ApplyYourself Application and Instructions](#).

If you will need accommodations in the application process, you must contact the Center for Disability & Access at least three weeks prior to the date you plan to submit. The Center's contact info is 801-581-5020, <https://disability.utah.edu>. The Center will work with you and the MSW program to make arrangements for accommodations.

Note: When you create your ApplyYourself account, you **MUST** use an email address that you check regularly. **We recommend that you do not use a Hotmail email account for your application as we have had problems with these accounts.**

Admissions Criteria

The Admissions Committee engages in a holistic review process, drawing information from the following sources:

1. Official transcripts
2. Four professional recommendations
3. Autobiographical Essay
4. Clinical & Ethical Case Study Analysis
5. Timed Social Issues Essay
6. Resume

Occasionally, the Admissions Committee will request an interview with an applicant. Applicants may not request interviews themselves.

Application Instructions

1. Transcripts

- You are required to upload actual transcript copies from all institutions where you have enrolled in courses to ApplyYourself, even if credits were transferred and show on another transcript. These transcripts must be issued by a Registrar's office. (We cannot accept unofficial online transcripts or student progress reports).
- **Do not mail transcripts to the U of U Admissions Office or the MSW Program.** We cannot upload transcripts for you.

2. Four Professional Recommendations

- Recommendations must be requested through AY application system, which will then contact your references with a link for them to submit the reference form. **Formal letters of recommendation are not required.**
- Recommendations must be from professionals (preferably licensed mental health professionals) who have supervised you or who have been directly responsible for assessing your human service-related work or volunteer experience.

- If you currently employed or volunteering within the field, you are strongly encouraged to provide a recommendation from your current supervisor.
- Professors are also acceptable references though we do not recommend that all of your recommendations come from professors.
- **Personal references from friends, neighbors, family members, personal therapists, and acquaintances will not be considered.**

3. Autobiographical Essay (3-4 pages)

- The MSW Admission Committee wants to know a) why you want to be a social worker, b) whether you have a sound understanding of the social work profession, and how it differs from other mental health disciplines, and c) how your life experiences (personal, professional, and educational) have prepared you for graduate studies in social work.
- The autobiographical essay should address the following elements:
 - What led you to choose social work as a profession;
 - Your career goals (please be as specific as possible and discuss how an MSW will support your goals);
 - Life experiences, family background, and educational experiences as they relate to your decision to become a social worker;
 - Any challenges or traumas you have dealt with in the past that may have bearing on your future work as a social worker;
 - Work and volunteer experiences (please focus on social work or human services-related experiences);
 - Leadership abilities and notable achievements.
- Formatting: length should be between three and four double-spaced pages. **Do not exceed four pages.** Use Times New Roman 12 point font with one inch margins. Do not include a cover page or headers.

3A. GPA Appeal Petition (only if your GPA is below a 3.0)

- Include a one page statement titled “GPA Appeal Petition” at the end of your Autobiographical Essay (this does not count against the 3-4 page limit of the Autobiographical Essay)
- Discuss the following:
 - Contributing factors to your undergraduate GPA
 - How you have otherwise demonstrated a capacity for success in a rigorous graduate program (superior grades during the final semester(s) of work prior to graduation, success in another degree or certificate program, etc.)
 - If granted admission to the program, how you plan to address potential obstacles to successfully completing the program

4. Clinical & Ethical Case Study Analysis (4-5 pages)

- Choose one of the case study options and write an essay identifying factors that should be considered by the social worker in the case. It is important that you address how the NASW Code of Ethics would bear on the case.
- Consider the following:
 - Which factors in this case should be considered and why.
 - How you would prioritize competing demands or resolve ethical dilemmas.
 - If there is missing information, how you would go about gathering this information.
 - What social justice considerations are reflected in this case.
- Reference and cite **specific codes** found in the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Formatting: the essay should be between four to five double-spaced pages, Times New Roman 12 point font, with one-inch margins. All referencing and citation must be in APA format Do not include a cover page or headers

5. Timed Social Issues Essay (Completed within 1 week of AY submission)

- Within approximately one week of your submission the AY application, you will receive an email from Instructure Canvas with a link to the timed essay website. Please add Instructure Canvas to your list of safe senders and check your spam folder periodically.
- The email sender and subject line will appear as follows:

From: Instructure Canvas [notifications@instructure.com]

Subject: Course Invitation

- The Instructure Canvas email will be sent to the email address you used to create your AY application. Use the **Guest Log In** to register and log in with this same email address, unless you created the application using your University of Utah uNID email address. If you did not use a U of U UMail address to create the application, do NOT log into Canvas with your uNID or password. Do not try to access the essay through CIS. **The timed essay can only be accessed using the email address associated with your AY Application.**
- You may register for the essay in Canvas first and return to complete the essay another time to avoid last minute problems. Please note that the initial invitation link only works once. Future logins must be done through the [Canvas Guest login page](#).
- You will have 14 days from the date of the Instructure Canvas email to access the site, read the instructions there, and complete the timed essay. If you have not completed the timed essay within this period your application materials will be considered incomplete, though your application will still be considered for admission. **Late essay submissions are not accepted.** If you anticipate difficulty scheduling the essay please notify the MSW Admissions Coordinator once you have submitted your application in AY.
- You will have one hour to complete the timed essay. Three randomly generated topics will be assigned to you and you will choose one to write about.
 - Your essay will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of writing, the depth of analysis, and the presence of well-written arguments both for and against the proposal.
- If you are requesting accommodations on the timed social issues essay, you will need to contact the Center for Disability & Access prior to submitting application materials. The Center's contact info is 581-5020 (V/TDD), disability.utah.edu. The Center will work with you and the MSW program to make arrangements for accommodations.
- **It is your responsibility to supply the correct email address in your application and to check all folders of your inbox to locate this email. Please do not call the MSW Admissions Office for technical assistance.**

6. Resume

- Please follow our [resume template](#) exactly, though your resume does not need to be limited to one page. List all work and volunteer experience with current or most recent experience listed first.
- List the **exact number of hours per month** for all work and volunteer positions to receive credit for these experiences.
- The MSW Admission Committee is particularly interested in your paid work and volunteer activities that are related to human services. [What Counts as Related Experience](#).
 - To ensure that full credit is given for related experience, make sure the job responsibilities you list give enough information for committee members to accurately determine which positions are relevant.
- Format: Times New Roman 12 point font, one inch margins.

Advanced Standing Applicants please indicate which of the four following options you are applying under (under the "Practicum Activities" section of the resume):

Option 1: You are currently in practicum

One of the four required recommendations must be from your BSW Program practicum field instructor.

Option 2: You have finished practicum

One of the four required recommendations must be from your BSW Program practicum field instructor **AND** the BSW field evaluation must be included in the application.

Option 3: You have not yet begun your practicum as of the application deadline

It is *highly* encouraged that at least one of your four required recommendations come from your direct supervisor.

Option 4: You have graduated and been working in a human services agency for a year or more

Practicum documentation is not necessary, but one of the four required recommendations must be from your direct supervisor.

RESUME TEMPLATE

Hours per month and supervisor information for all work and volunteer experience are **required as shown** to ensure you receive points for your experience.

YOUR NAME

Current Address
City, State, Zip
(801) 555-1212
Email address

Education

University or College name _____ Graduation Month, Year
School/College of _____
BS/BA in _____
▪ Minor if applicable
▪ Certificate(s) if applicable

Practicum Activities

If you are not a BSW student, do not include this section on your resume. All other applicants please skip to Volunteer Activities section.

State whether applying under option 1, 2, 3 or 4, as listed in the red box above.

If applying under options 1 or 2, practicum agency placement(s) must be listed here, including field supervisor name and contact information.

Agency Name: _____
Name of Field Supervisor: _____

Practicum Title/Role, Agency/Organization, City, State _____ Dates: Month Year to Month Year
Name, telephone number and email address of immediate supervisor
▪ Job responsibilities
▪ **Number of hours per month**

Volunteer Activities with Social Welfare or Civic Organizations

Volunteer Title/Role, Agency/Organization, City, State _____ Dates: Month Year to Month Year
Name, telephone number and email address of immediate supervisor
▪ Job responsibilities
▪ **Number of hours per month**

Work Experience

Your Title/Role, Agency/Organization, City, State _____ Dates: Month Year to Month Year
Name, telephone number and email address of immediate supervisor
▪ Job responsibilities
▪ **Number of hours per month**

Leadership/Honors/Activities

Please list any leadership, honors, or extracurricular activities below. For example:

- Dean's List, University of Utah, College of Social Work Fall 2010
- President, BSWSA January 2011-May 2011
- Paper published in Undergraduate Research Journal Spring 2011 Issue

Case Study Options

Note: These vignettes have been created for the purpose of providing case examples for admission essays only and do not represent any particular individual or family. The names are fictitious. Any resemblance the vignette may bear to a real family is pure coincidence. Please choose one case study and discuss it as outlined in the [instructions](#).

Case #1:

You are employed full time as a hospital social worker on an inpatient psychiatric unit. You have been assigned the following patient and you need to help develop her discharge plan. Even though your responsibilities revolve around Ruby, other significant factors need to be considered in order for any plans surrounding Ruby to be successful.

Ruby is a 63-year-old Latina woman diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and she takes medications to help control hallucinations and delusions. She is also diagnosed with diabetes and needs to take insulin. She is morbidly obese. It has been many years since she was last employed. She attended high school through the tenth grade and can only read and write at basic levels. Due to her financial situation and her documented mental illness she receives Social Security (SSD) benefits as a disabled person, has Medicaid coverage for her medical and mental health needs, and qualifies for several low-income programs, such as housing and food assistance.

Ruby was admitted to an inpatient psychiatric unit at a local hospital after her daughters took her to the emergency room saying she was “acting crazy” and that she shouldn’t be allowed to return to the apartment because “she can’t take care of herself.” Ruby was expressing thoughts of suicide at the time of her admission to the hospital seven days ago but is no longer expressing these thoughts and seems ready for discharge back to the community. Ruby reports that she does not know where she will live when she is discharged from the hospital because her landlord is evicting her from the apartment. It is a one bedroom apartment with rent subsidized by the government. Her lease is terminating at the end of the month (15 days) and her landlord has given her notice that he will not renew the lease with her. She needs to vacate the apartment in 15 days or eviction proceedings will commence.

Ruby has two unmarried adult daughters. Her daughters are both homeless and they each have two children. The children range in age from one and a half to four years old. It appears that the daughters and children have been living with Ruby on and off for the past several months. The neighbors have been complaining to the landlord about the children running unsupervised around the apartment building and about visitors coming and going from the building at all hours of the day and night. Her neighbors also say they suspect that the daughters are involved with illegal drug use and dealing. It is unclear whether Ruby would be able to renew her lease if her daughters were not staying with her. Ruby, however, maintains that her family is very important to her and that she intends to help them in any way she can and wants to find a place to live where she can stay close with her children and grandchildren. As Ruby’s social worker on the inpatient psychiatric unit, what would you do?

Case #2:

You are a social worker at a community mental health clinic. A woman has come in seeking help for her son, Richard. Richard is a 15-year-old male who lives with his mom and two younger brothers. They live in a rural area where the nearest large city is 200 miles away. His family moved to the United States when Richard was a baby, to escape the war in their Latin American country. Richard’s father committed suicide when Richard was six years old. He has very little memory of his father and knows he committed suicide. His mom does not like to talk about his father even though Richard likes to ask questions about him to get to know him better.

Richard recently told his mother that he is gay, but she thinks he must be delusional and that some sort of medication can fix the problem. She also thinks that not having a father figure in his life must have made him this way, which is something she feels guilty about. His mother puts a lot of pressure on him to be the “man of the house” and be a role model for his brothers. She is very traditional and requires that he and his brothers attend church every Sunday.

Richard attends a small high school and has a few female friends whom he sees at school only. His mom does not allow him to hang out with friends outside of school because he needs to watch his brothers while she works evenings and weekends at her minimum wage job. Occasionally, Richard has to stay home from school to watch his brothers when his mom picks up extra shifts at work. This, in addition to him not really applying himself, has contributed to him not doing well in school.

Though his mother is primarily concerned with him thinking he's gay, she is also worried about the cutting Richard has been doing lately. She is afraid that the cutting will lead to him taking his own life like his father did, but Richard says the cutting is just a way to relieve stress. He says that he feels that nobody understands him, and that he had always felt different from other boys. There are no LGBTQ resources in this small town, and he knows that the community isn't very accepting of LGBTQ individuals. He knows he needs to be doing better in school but doesn't know how to make that change, especially when he has so many responsibilities at home. You have just been assigned Richard's case. What would you, as the social worker, do in this case?

Case #3:

You work at a private practice, and a former client has referred Tonya to you. She is a 38-year-old married woman who has a 13-year-old son and a 9-year-old daughter. Her husband works full time and pays most of the bills. She works 15 to 20 hours a week, and makes \$9.00 an hour.

She tells you that she is unhappy in her relationship, and that her husband has been abusive towards her. When he has a bad day at work he drinks a lot and often picks a fight with her. At times, he puts her down, and gets jealous when she talks to other people, including other family members. Some of his behaviors have included hitting her, pushing her, and kicking her. She adds that he can be really nice at other times, and she wishes she could learn how to keep him happy.

Tonya's husband has a concealed carry permit and owns a few guns for protection. Though she has never addressed it with him, him owning and having access to guns make her nervous. He has never threatened her or her children with one, but she does fear that something could set him off one day and he could snap.

She has called the police a few times after he got physical with her. They did not arrest or detain her husband, though she was willing to file charges. She did not feel like it was helpful. She states that her two children have been in the room when he has hit her and talked "mean" to her. She is concerned that this is having a negative impact on them.

Recently, she has begun to see her son have anger problems. He blames others when things do not go well for him. She is also concerned about him because he does not listen to her anymore and he recently got into a fight at school. Her daughter has become more withdrawn and likes to keep to herself. However, she has joined an afterschool program that she seems to like.

Tonya tells you she just wants someone to talk to. She expresses she is having a hard time thinking clearly right now. Tonya shares that she has a history of depression and a history of self-harm. She currently is feeling depressed because of the fighting at home, but denies any desire to self-harm. She feels stuck in her situation, and wants to keep her family together. Tonya is concerned that if she leaves her husband he may find her and hurt her. She also does not feel like she can support herself. Tonya is also concerned about keeping her visit with you private. She does not want her husband to see any bills from you. What would you, as Tonya's social worker, do in this case?

Case #4

You are the director of a day treatment program in a community mental health center, serving youth ages 12-18 with seriously persistent mental health, behavioral, and developmental disorders. Denzil has been placed in your program for therapy, medication management, and specialized schooling.

Denzil is a 12-year-old African American boy raised in a middle-class home. His parents are currently divorced, with Denzil living with his mother and seeing his father regularly. The relationship between his mother and father is contentious partially because his father believes in doctors and medical treatment, whereas his mother relies on her family and pastor for guidance. Her aversion to seeking medical and mental health treatment for her son is part of why his father is currently seeking custody.

Denzil's mother has strong opinions about traditional healing practices. The fact she and her siblings all lived into adulthood is evidence to her the "old ways" work. Denzil's mother does not believe in medical intervention except for physical injuries and insisted that Denzil not be vaccinated as a child.

A juvenile court judge has ordered Denzil into a day treatment program seeking compliance by both Denzil and his mother with prescribed treatment protocols. In particular, Denzil has a history of what appears to be ADHD. He has been suspended from school numerous times, and these suspensions have impaired his academic progress. He has also

missed school because his mother has begun to keep him at home to treat him with “natural” remedies. Denzil is small for his age, and his mother has read that Ritalin and other drugs for ADHD inhibit growth in pubescent boys. She has him on a special diet, which includes drinking a cup of her special herbal tea every hour.

She has accepted that Denzil has to go to day treatment because of the court order, but wants to continue her herbal treatments in lieu of medications prescribed by the center psychiatrist. She states the behavioral interventions provided by the therapists in conjunction with her regimen will help him. She stated that if she is forced to give her son medications, she will flee the state with him and live in a place where the government cannot control them.

As the director of the program, you have to follow the court order and follow agency policies while ensuring appropriate and meaningful treatment is being provided to Denzil and his family. Thinking as a social worker, what are the factors to be considered and how will you balance these often competing mandates? What social justice factors can you identify in this case?