Description
Healthy families form the foundation for healthy communities; and healthy communities have the capacity to support and nurture the development of families. Nationally and internationally, families and communities face pressures that can impact this development. High rates of poverty and violence, substance use, physical, emotional or mental challenges can test the resilience of families and communities. Social workers have specialized skills that can help children, youth and their families thrive in the context of their communities. Using culturally competent evidence-based interventions, social workers provide services to maximize chances of success and well-being for children, youth, and their families, and to ensure that service systems provide them with the supports they need.

The Children, Youth, and their Families (CYF) specialization is designed to prepare MSW graduates in their advanced year to engage in competent practice with children, youth, and their families through direct practice, case management, community advocacy, organizational change and policy development. While understanding that no two families are alike, students learn how theory, policy and practice impact those we serve. Theories related to individual and interpersonal development across the lifespan, and knowledge of social and behavioral theories across social systems relevant to children, youth, and families are covered in this specialization. The structure and functions of the policy process in the United States as it relates to children, youth, and their families are also addressed.

Students in the CYF specialization will learn how to improve well-being of children, youth, and their families by planning and implementing interventions that are developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, family-centered, and empowering. Focal areas of study in the CYF specialization include school social work, social service casework, advocacy, community-based prevention and health promotion, clinical practice with children and youth, parenting interventions, family therapy, and family-centered services. The CYF specialization prepares graduates to work in a wide range of settings that serve children, youth, and their families, such as schools, juvenile justice, mental health, child welfare, substance use, youth development, early intervention, and disability services.