Description

Since the profession’s inception, social work has played a key role in the delivery of health and mental health services. With the passage of comprehensive health care reform in 2010, roles for social workers in providing health and mental health care are poised to expand dramatically.

In this new era of health care, an emphasis on integrated health care models, including patient-centered medical homes and accountable care organizations and community mental health and substance abuse recovery models, introduce new opportunities to improve care coordination, reduce unnecessary service use, and make health care more effective.

An increased focus on prevention and health promotion will refocus the aims of health care towards promoting wellbeing. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 25% increase in jobs in health and mental health social work over the next decade, making it the fastest growing service sector in the profession.

The Health and Mental Health specialization prepares MSW graduates to become leaders in this new era of health, training students to use evidence-based practices to promote health among individuals, groups, families, organizations, and communities.

Students are prepared to work in a variety of roles such as hospital or clinical social worker (for example in an oncology, hospice, or dialysis center); mental health therapist; case manager; community health worker; substance use treatment counselor; health promotion specialist; and, health policy analyst.

Across all of these roles, students are prepared to participate in interprofessional teams who work together to meet clients’ comprehensive needs. Focal areas include theories relevant to health and mental health and their application to practice across systems; the social worker’s role in forming, implementing and evaluating policies and services; and skills designed to enhance effective collaboration, communication, client and community engagement, motivation, and empowerment.