Intensive Weekend MSW Program for Human Services Employees

Rutgers School of Social Work's Intensive Weekend MSW Program is designed to enable students employed in social and other human service related fields to pursue their MSW while continuing to work full-time. Students admitted to the program can expect to complete their MSW education in 3 years. Advanced standing admissions for students with an undergraduate degree in social work from an accredited baccalaureate program in social work may be possible. These students complete the degree in 1½ to 2 years.

The program currently has 160 students enrolled in various locations throughout the state; over 150 students, all employees of human service agencies, have graduated from the program since its inception in 2006, when it initially began as a program for public child welfare employees. Current students represent a broad range of fields: mental health, care management, health care, corrections/re-entry, county and municipal social services, as well as child welfare – providing services to individuals and families across the life span.

Course structure and curriculum

The Intensive Weekend program offers a course of study that is suited to the needs of working professionals. Courses in the program are scheduled consecutively in a continuous cycle throughout the year. Taking one course at a time not only helps students better manage studies and their work responsibilities and personal life; it is also conducive to integrating what they learn in class in the field and on the job. Students attend class one weekend in each month, with online support in the interim weeks. Weekend class days vary according to the regional program, but each class weekend is comprised of 2 or 3 full day sessions. Each course consists of two sets of weekend meetings, either 4 or 5 weekend days in total. The courses are hybrid and are supported by online activities in the interim weeks. Because of the intensive nature of course work, full attendance to all classes and active participation in online components are required for credit.

The program’s curriculum is commensurate with the on campus clinical curriculum and offers prescribed electives, including selective courses in supervision and management, attuned to the needs of social workers already working in the field.

The start of classes in the Intensive Weekend program is preceded by a preparatory program comprised of Writing for Social Workers, a hybrid course intended to prepare students for academic and professional writing, workshops to orient students to field education, and the initiation of their field placement.
Field education

A minimum of one day and maximum of two days each week is devoted to field for the duration of the program, in an assignment that differs from the student's customary work assignment, and is supervised by an MSW with three years post masters experience. The supervisor must be different from the student’s customary work supervisor. Field placements are year round and generally last 24 - 36 months, 18 – 28 months for students admitted with advanced standing.

The employing agency may provide the student with an alternate job assignment for part of the work-week to meet the requirements for field, or provide flexible scheduling so that the student can fulfill field requirements either within the agency or at an outside placement. Most students are able to arrange a field internship at their place of employment.

Locations and Programs

Central New Jersey: Bordentown

Classes are held Friday/Saturday/Sunday one weekend and Saturday/Sunday the next weekend, for a total of 5 full-day classes. Only one class every 2 months is on a Friday. Class time is supported by online activities in the 4 week interim periods, including threaded discussions. Classes are held at Rutgers University's EcoComplex in Bordentown: http://ecocomplex.rutgers.edu/

Southern New Jersey: Mays Landing

Each course consists of one 3 day (Friday/Saturday/Sunday) and one 2 day (Friday/Saturday) weekend, for a total of 5 full-day classes. Class time is supported by online activities in the 4 week interim periods, including threaded discussions. Classes are held at Rutgers University's off-campus location at Atlantic Cape Community College in Mays Landing: http://rutgersataccc.org

Northern New Jersey: Parsippany & new location –*** to be determined***

Classes meet Saturdays and Sundays one weekend each month and participate in live online class sessions and threaded discussions during the 4-week interim periods. Each course consists of 4 weekend in-person class days and at least three required live online class sessions, that are prescheduled at the beginning of the course. Classes are held at the Rutgers School of Social Work/Institute for Families Training classroom in Parsippany and a new location, to be determined, for our incoming 3 year program students. We have outgrown our Parsippany site!

Advanced Standing

Prospective students with a BSW and strong academic and experiential credentials can be admitted to the Intensive Weekend program with advanced standing. Given the credit for undergraduate social work courses, they complete 39 credits rather than 60 credits and may complete the MSW degree in about 1 ½ - 2 years. Advanced standing admission is available this year in Bordentown, Mays Landing, and in Parsippany.
Benefits for students

The Intensive Weekend program permits the student to complete requirements for the MSW while remaining employed full time, without losing the salary and benefits of full time employment. The program is completed in approximately 3 years, as opposed to four years in part time study (2 years for advanced standing). The rhythm of classes and ability to concentrate on one subject matter at a time is conducive to managing academics and professional life. The course schedule and active learning format makes classroom learning more easily available for immediate on the job application. Taking classes with a cohort of students similarly employed serves as a support system while in school and broadens students’ network of professional relationships.

Benefits for employers

The Intensive Weekend program contributes to staff development and retention. Because students remain in the employ of the agency while in school, they continue to contribute to the work of the agency as they enhance their knowledge base and practice skills. In particular, we encourage student involvement in field education projects that contribute to the overall needs and goals of the agency. Sometimes, these projects address a gap in service or area that the agency may wish to further develop. Overall, the agency, employees, and clients benefit from increased professionalization and the continuity of skilled social service staff.

Further information for employers and applicants:

Prospective students interested in applying to the Intensive Weekend program must have a minimum of one year’s work experience in the field, plan to remain in the employ of the sponsoring agency for the duration of studies, and meet School of Social Work admission standards.

At a minimum, employing agencies are expected to provide partial job reassignment, OR flexible scheduling or release so that students are able to complete field education requirements, either at their place of employment or at an alternate agency. They are expected to provide release time or flexible scheduling, including the use of the students’ personal time, if necessary, to permit students to attend class. Although some agencies are able to provide tuition or other financial assistance in support their employees’ educational goals, agency financial support is not a condition of acceptance. On the other hand, support for the student’s candidacy and opportunities for field education are integral to the student’s success in the program.

Agencies may require post completion commitments from their employees commensurate with the extent of support provided while the student is in school. Such work agreements and any other personnel matters as they may relate to the employee’s participation in the program are at the discretion of the employer, pursuant to the policies of individual agencies.
Application deadline, interviews, admission decisions:

There is a 2-tiered application process for the Intensive Weekend program. An interview is also required for admission.

1. Online application, all transcripts, and supporting documentation are due March 1 for the 3 year program, February 1 for advanced standing applicants (who hold a BSW). Please apply to only one Intensive Weekend choice. Students wishing to be considered for on-campus admissions as well as the Intensive Weekend program must apply to BOTH programs. Please indicate that you have done so on your personal statement.

Please be sure to include:
- Supervisor recommendation (as one of 3 required recommendation letters)
- Resume
- Transcripts from all undergraduate and graduate studies
- Confidential disclosure form

2. Following preliminary review, qualified applicants will be invited to submit Supplementary Materials for the Intensive Weekend program, by April 30, or March 31 for advanced standing applicants.

This year, the forms will be completed and submitted online. Applicants will be required to print these forms for review by their Agency Director/designate and proposed Field Instructor and submit by mail a Confirmatory Form and Field Instructor Resume signed by all parties. Supplementary Materials consist of:
- Brief description of agency and applicant’s work assignment
- Plans and availability to meet field and academic requirements
- Preliminary Field Education Proposal and supporting documentation

Applicants may download a guide to Supplementary Materials from the website to get an idea of the types of questions asked.

Applicants are encouraged to check their email regularly once application materials are submitted to avoid delays in moving through the process. We also recommend that students apply for financial aid in conjunction with their admission application, or when they file IRS statements.

Interviews are required for admission. We expect to hold interviews from April – June. Final admission decisions will be made in July/August.

Program start dates:

Program Orientation is scheduled mid-week during the last week of August, on-campus in New Brunswick. The preparatory program is in September/October and most classes start in November. Advanced standing class start dates vary according to location.