

MSW Essay Questions

This is an important part of your application and should reflect who you are and your reasons for seeking admission to the MSW program (The essay should be four pages in total. The case study should be 2 pages in total). Please address ALL of the following points/questions:

1. Please describe the development of your interest in the field of social work. Include your immediate and long-range career goals, however tentative. For applicants who are employed in the social work positions, include your reasons for seeking graduate education at this time.
2. Choose one of the following areas: family –focused practice, multiculturalism, mental health, child welfare, gerontology, substance abuse, public welfare, or corrections. What do you see as one of the most important ethical issues of our time within that field? In what ways has this issue been important historically?
3. Please speak to your experience working with individuals from different backgrounds than your own (e.g. religion, age, economic, race /ethnicity, persons with different abilities).
4. Please address any special academic considerations that should be taken into account in the review of your application and anything else you think we should know about you that would help us in making an admissions decision.

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**Nationally Accredited by the
Council on Social Work
Education**

CASE STUDY

Please choose from one of the following case studies, read and respond to the questions that follow.

A. Betsy is a woman who does not have a home. She has also been diagnosed with a chronic mental illness. Her family abandoned her due to all her special needs long ago. You are the only social worker at the homeless shelter in town. Betsy has male friends that she normally stays with, but sometimes they will not allow her to stay with them, so she is forced to stay at the shelter. These “friends” take her money, force her to buy their food with her food stamps, and occasionally force her to have sex with them. She confidentially tells you that she is saving her money for a deposit, first month’s rent, and last month’s rent on an apartment of her own. While you are very happy for her, you wonder aloud how she has been able to save any money due to her circumstances. Betsy further confides that she has been receiving disability checks for the past year in both her maiden name and in her married name. These funds will allow her to start up her own household. She has not had a home of her own in over five years. She lost everything in a fire, and since she had no insurance, she was not able to start over.* *How do you proceed in your work with Betsy? How would you identify the conflicting ethical priorities? Rank them in terms of priority. Describe your ethical decision making process in a narrative form.*

B. Maryann, a single parent of two girls in elementary school, is very sick. The girl’s father left when they were two and four and he has never been seen since. She was been diagnosed HIV+, and now the illness has begun to progress. She attends Narcotics Anonymous (NA) several times a week as a part of her recovery from a heroin addiction. NA has been very instrumental in providing the support she has needed during her illness, as well as her recovery process. At times, her illness and the fear it provokes has overcome her coping ability and her NA friends and sponsor have acted to pull her through. She also meets with a social worker for counseling on a weekly basis. Her social worker has told that no matter what happens she will always be there for her. The social worker advises Maryann to avoid telling her daughters that she has HIV and to say simply that she has a virus. The social worker worries that if the children knew they would tell others, and then they would be discriminated against by the school personnel. Maryann thinks her older daughter may know something serious is going on, and she is concerned that she is building a wall by withholding the information about her illness.* * *What are the ethical issues here? How would you articulate the conflicting ethical priorities? Please rank them in terms of importance and justify your reasoning. Please describe in narrative form what steps this social worker should take at this point in order to address these concerns.*

C. Marie is a 42-year old teacher who has been waiting for a heart transplant for nearly 18 months. She has no other medical problems that would cause the transplant to be rejected. Early this morning, she was rushed to the hospital. She is in heart failure but

she is conscious and lucid. Her survival depends on the availability of a suitable donor organ, but a heart is not available. A cardiologist, Dr. Johnson, has taken a scientific interest in Marie's case. He is experimenting with transplanting the hearts of young mammals into human beings, and he has spoken to Marie at some length in the past about her participation in his study. Marie has not wanted to participate; however, today given the circumstances, Dr. Johnson is optimistic that she will agree to the experimental surgery.

Marie's daughter, Susan, is a college sophomore. Four months ago, Susan unexpectedly became pregnant. Marie is not happy about the circumstances but is looking forward to becoming a grandmother. She has begged God to let her live long enough to be present for the delivery of Susan's baby. Susan is contacted about her mother's health crisis and rushes to the hospital. On the way she is in a terrible car accident. An ambulance takes her to the hospital in grave distress. An hour later she is on a respirator suffering with severe brain trauma from which she will not recover. Her family will have to make a decision about leaving her on life support. She is an organ donor and if the family takes her off life support, she could donate her heart to her mother. The chief of surgery, Dr. Carrigan, wants to use her heart for Marie's heart transplant because the chances of survival for Marie are three times better with a human heart than with the mammal heart. Susan's obstetrician, Dr. Osbourne, would prefer to leave Susan on life support for as long as possible in order to allow the fetus to develop another eight weeks to a point at which it could sustain life outside the womb. The two Doctors consult about which way to go and cannot come to an agreement. Dr. Johnson, the cardiologist, enters the consultation and argues that his experiment with the mammal heart would allow Marie to have a chance to live and it would allow the baby a chance to live. Marie's chances for survival are not as good with the mammal heart, but the contribution to science outweighs the risk to her life in his mind.

Nurse Beamer becomes quite upset over the Doctor's impasse and says, "These are people, not objects, and Marie is asking for Susan. What am I to tell her?" The Doctors suggest that Nurse Beamer call the social worker to work with the family situation.

Please take the role of the medical social worker and describe the ethical issues that this case study presents. How would you articulate the conflicting ethical priorities? Which is most important and why? Describe in narrative form how this social worker should proceed.

*Loosely adapted from a scenario offered by F. Reamer.

**Abramson, M. (1996). Toward a more holistic understanding of ethics in social work. *Social Work in Health Care*, 23(2), 1-14.

Experience in Human Services Form

Name: _____
SSS#: _____

Please indicate your previous experience in Social Work/Human Services. Include student and volunteer experience as well as paid employment.

Name & Location of Agency:

Capacity of Service/Job Title:

Clientele: _____
Dates: From _____ / _____ To: _____

Supervisor: _____

Average hours per week: _____

Describe your duties/responsibilities:

Name & Location of Agency:

Capacity of Service/Job Title:

Clientele: _____
Dates: From _____ / _____ To: _____

Supervisor: _____

Average hours per week: _____

Describe your duties/responsibilities:

APPLICANT'S NAME _____

Name & Location of Agency: _____

Capacity of Service/Job Title

Clientele: _____

Dates: From _____ / _____ To: _____

Supervisor: _____

Average hours per week: _____

Describe your duties/responsibilities:

Name & Location of Agency: _____

Capacity of Service/Job Title

Clientele: _____

Dates: From _____ / _____ To: _____

Supervisor: _____

Average hours per week: _____

Describe your duties/responsibilities:

Curriculum Option/Degree Path

Applicant's Name: _____
{Please check the appropriate areas for your application}

_____ **Radford Campus *Advanced Standing***

(MUST have/will have a BSW from an accredited School of Social Work)

Name of institution: _____

_____ Full-time or _____ Part-time

_____ Check here if interested in stipend information for field placement with the Veterans Administration.

***Advanced Standing students interested in a placement with the Veterans Administration should contact Dr. Phil Mongan at pmongan@radford.edu for deadline information.

_____ Check here if interested in stipend information for field placement with Child Welfare.

***Students interested in the Child Welfare Stipend should contact Erica Thornton at ethornton@radford.edu for deadline information.

_____ **Radford Campus *Standard***

_____ Full-time or _____ Part-time

_____ Check here if interested in stipend information for field placement with Child Welfare.

***Students interested in the Child Welfare Stipend should contact Erica Thornton at ethornton@radford.edu for deadline information.

_____ **Roanoke Campus (Standard part-time only)**

Legal/Military History

Name _____

Please note: Convictions may impact your professional career in the field of social work. The ability to purchase liability insurance in the role of student while enrolled in the program may be affected. If a student is not be granted liability insurance for field purposes, the student will not be allowed to enter field and therefore; will not be able to complete the program. Furthermore; Licensure and the ability to be covered by agencies for liability insurance when employed may also be impacted.

1. Have you ever been convicted of a crime other than a routine traffic offense?

YES _____ NO _____

2. Have you ever been subjected to dismissal, suspension, probation, or other serious disciplinary or academic sanction by any college, university, professional school, or professional association?

YES _____ NO _____

3. Have you ever served in the military?

YES _____ NO _____

a. If yes, did you receive less than an honorable discharge? If discharge based solely on sexual orientation, mark "NO".

4. Do you have a founded DSS report against you?

YES _____ NO _____

5. If you answered "YES" to any question 1-4, please explain the circumstances below. In your explanation, please include dates, circumstances related to the offense and the official charge. *An affirmative answer does not prejudice admission to Radford University. Your answer will be reviewed in relation to all aspects of your file, and will be utilized in making admissions decisions to the School of Social Work. Applications will not be considered without the written explanation.*
