Graduate Diploma
Critical Leadership in Social Services and Communities

Knowledge and Ideas
- Critical analyses and conceptual frameworks about changing conditions in social services and communities

Models and Perspectives
- A range of models for progressive and transformative leadership
- A range of perspectives (including feminist, Indigenous, and post-heroic) on the complexities and possibilities of ethical leading in the contemporary context

Professional Reflection and Development
- Opportunities to share knowledge, stories and strategies, and to reflect on leadership practice, with respected local leaders

Community
- A chance to build community with people who are engaged in the daily work of leading and sustaining progressive public services
Our instructors have years of practice, research and advocacy experience, and are deeply connected with their communities.

Tara LaRose has many years of practice experience in community organizing, asset mapping in low income communities, child protection services, homelessness, mobile mental health crisis counseling, sexual assault and domestic violence care, and individual and couples’ counseling. Her research explores changing conditions of social work labour and implications for social workers’ identities, professional status, work design and scope of practice. Her work highlights a growing tension between definitions of professional leadership and the goals and values of social work, the significant labour required to bridge the gap between ideals and realities of practice, and the variety of strategies and tactics social workers use to preserve social justice in practice. Tara is also interested in the potential of social media and Internet-based narratives to create spaces for social justice communication, consensus building and community organizing/ activation, and the ways digital spaces are educational, mentoring and empowerment resources for social work leaders at the grassroots level and in organizations. Tara is teaching 741: Changing Social Services, Changing Communities: Focus on Leadership and 742: Organizational and Social Change: Theories, Practices and Possibilities.

Stephanie Baker Collins has worked in social policy analysis, research, public education and advocacy at community and national levels. Stephanie examines the impact of public policy on the lives of marginalized groups, conducting research in partnership with community organizations and advocating for justice in public policy. Her policy research on socio-economic issues has included writing and presenting briefs before Standing Committees of Parliament. Her current projects focus on the intersection of disability and homelessness for youth, and policy impacts of the social assistance system in Ontario. Stephanie is teaching 743: Critical Approaches to Evidence and Evaluation in social services and communities.

Saara Greene has worked in a range of social work positions and settings including as Director of Research and Evaluation at Fife House, an agency providing supportive housing for people living with HIV/AIDS. Saara is committed to community-based research and to developing models of CBR that address methodological and ethical challenges. Her research focuses on the needs and experiences of women living with HIV in relation to housing instability, pregnancy, birth and motherhood, and the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure, paying attention to the ways that racism, colonization and sexism intersect in women’s lives. Saara is teaching 721: Changing Communities: Tensions and Possibilities for Citizenship and Social Justice.

Laura O’Neill has over 14 years of social work practice experience in outpatient and inpatient hospital programs. She provides clinical supervision at the undergraduate and graduate levels across a range of disciplines and is committed to taking what are often complex theories and finding ways to teach them to students, using specific examples from work settings. In her PhD study Laura examined a specific computerized psychosocial assessment, showing how such tools can simplify and narrow professional practice, turning it away from care and justice. Laura is teaching 740: Changing Social Service Organizations: Implications for Workers and Service Users.

Justice-focused LEADERSHIP

Do you have an MSW or MA, and leadership experience in social services or communities?

The Graduate Diploma in Critical Leadership in Social Services and Communities at McMaster’s School of Social Work offers the opportunity to strengthen your capacity for leading in justice-focused ways, and to connect with people with similar commitments and goals.

Major changes in funding and governance have strained and constrained social and community services. Requirements for efficiency, competition, and narrow accountability are reshaping conditions for workers and service users and changing how social agencies operate.

In response to these challenges, and at the urging of community partners, McMaster University is excited to offer a Graduate Diploma in Critical Leadership in Social Services and Communities. The program is structured around the recognition of conditions in contemporary social services and communities work, with a focus on expansive and critical definitions of leadership. It will support leaders as they reflect on changing conditions and consider their own approaches to progressive leadership.

This Graduate Diploma program welcomes people who have an MA or an MSW and leadership experience, including people:

- in or aspiring to formally recognized leadership roles in social and community services
- in direct or front-line service positions who are sustaining justice-orientated approaches in their agencies
- active in community organizing, and leading social movements

Courses:

741: Changing Social Services, Changing Communities: Focus on Leadership
742: Organizational and Social Change: Theories, Practices and Possibilities for Leadership
743: Critical Approaches to Evidence and Evaluation in Social Services & Communities

And one of:

740: Changing Social Service Organizations: Implications for Workers and Service Users
721: Changing Communities: Tensions and Possibilities for Citizenship and Social Justice