VOLUNTEER AND/OR SOCIAL/HUMAN SERVICE WORK EXPERIENCE

# Why do I need volunteer, placement and/or work experience to apply to the School of Social Work BSW Program?

As part of the requirements for your social work degree you will have two field placements. One in third year and one in fourth year (each placement is 390 hours). To be successful in these environments it is important that students entering the BSW Program have some volunteer, placement and/or work experience in social service/human service settings.

# How many hours do I need to complete?

Applicants must have a minimum of 50 hours of relevant volunteer and/or work experience in social/human services settings to be considered for admission. Many applicants will exceed this minimum. An additional 50 hours must be completed before first BSW program placement.

# What kind of experiences are considered relevant?

The experiences should focus on social service/human service-related activities and have direct and ongoing contact with community members in social service/human service settings. What we are looking for is diverse experience working/doing placement/volunteering directly with community members (i.e., children, seniors, people with disabilities, poverty/homelessness, LGBTQ+). We are also looking for consistency, rather than one-off events. We are looking for experiences that situate you within organizations, forming relationships with community members and staff alike.

Examples of relevant experience include but are not limited to:

* working on a crisis line
* working in women’s support services
* helping residents of a long-term care facility
* working with children or adults with disabilities
* peer mentorship
* volunteering within your cultural or faith community.

It can also include community participation and leadership and social change activities such as:

* Advocacy
* Education
* Social action

Examples that are **not** considered relevant experience include things like: babysitting, service jobs such as serving in a restaurant or bar, retail work, or administrative jobs such as reception and filing.

# Where can I find volunteer experiences?

Applicants can find current volunteer opportunities online at Volunteer Ontario, volunteer.ca or CharityVillage. If you are a McMaster University student, you can connect with the [Student Success Centre](https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/). You are also encouraged to seek opportunities in your local community.

# Can the mandatory high school volunteer hours in Ontario count towards the 100 minimum requirement?

If you have completed any hours in community organizations like the ones above, then yes, those hours can be counted. If you have completed hours volunteering in your high school for things like the drama club, or handing out water for the Terry Fox run then those hours would not count. Check your experiences by looking at the criteria below.

# How do I know if my volunteer opportunity will be considered relevant?

1. Is it working directly with community members?
2. Is it working within an area/topic that is important to social work, things like: homelessness, racism, violence, mental health, substance use, social change, disability justice, seniors’ wellbeing, poverty, equity, and inclusion?
3. Is it situated within an organization or faith/cultural/neighbourhood community?
4. Will I get to know staff sufficiently so that someone in the organization will be able to write a positive reference for me?

If the answer is “yes” to all four of these questions you have a good opportunity!

If you have further questions about the volunteer/work hours requirement, please contact Janice Chaplin at chaplin@mcmaster.ca