

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Academic Year:	2026-2027
Credential:	Ontario College Diploma
Program Delivery:	Full-Time
Duration:	2 Years
Length:	4 Semesters
Program Code(s):	A151 - Timmins Campus (PC) A154 - Distance (CK)

DESCRIPTION

The Mental Health and Addictions Worker program allows students to analyze intersecting causes and impacts of addiction and mental health issues from a multidimensional framework that integrates an Anti-Oppressive Practice length along with a strength-based approach to supporting clients.

Students learn how to interact with clients on an individual, group and community level all while advocating for appropriate systemic changes. Throughout the program, students can apply theoretical concepts through lab-based activities, simulations, fieldwork placement and experiential learning opportunities.

The interactive labs allow students to work with actors in the field to practice and refine their interviewing and counselling skills. The capstone course encourages students to advocate for social change and promote the field of addictions and mental health overall.

You will challenge the stigma associated with these problems including your own hidden biases to develop holistic healing plans that work and master the self-care strategies that will be critical to your long-term success. Finally, you will put theory into practice during a 580-hour fieldwork placement with social services employers of all kinds including shelters, drop-in centers, recovery homes, correctional facilities, crisis support agencies, and more. These skills have never been more in demand more, and you can make a profound difference in the lives of others by studying here.

This program will prepare you for a rewarding career as an in-demand counsellor, case manager, or outreach worker. In a collaborative lab environment, you will gradually hone your communication, listening and crisis intervention skills – all while gaining an awareness of the complex causes and impacts of mental health issues and addiction.

The program ties in various elements of Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice from the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW), giving graduates a strong ethical framework to ensure they are meeting the needs of clients throughout the community. As such, the AMHW program was granted SSW equivalency status through the OCSWSSW, and graduates are eligible for registration with the regulatory college. Graduates of our Mental Health and Addictions Worker program can register with the OCSWSSW.

Distance Delivery Information (A154)

Our distance program is synchronous, meaning, classes are scheduled each semester for a class day and time for you to attend online. It is important to note that all classes that have lab components (and some

others) have mandatory attendance and participation to be successful in the course. Students who are in the distance program must have a working camera and microphone on their device. This is mandatory for our distance program as it will allow students to participate and engage with classmates and the course material.

Our distance students can do their placements in their city/town of their choice, but placements are done in person. Students studying outside of the Timmins area are responsible for securing their own fieldwork placement which will be approved by the placement coordinator. Both the on campus and distance Mental Health and Addictions Worker program are vigorous programs. For this reason, the program coordinator can meet with you to discuss part-time pathways.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Professionals with training in addictions and mental health are highly sought after by social service employers.

Graduates of the Mental Health and Addictions Worker program can find employment in social service and government agencies, mental health agencies, group homes, shelters, drop-in centres, hospitals, health care services, correctional facilities, recovery or rehabilitation homes and crisis support agencies in roles such as Case Manager, Harm Reduction Worker, Street Outreach Worker, Short-Term Crisis Bed Worker, Front-Line Shelter Worker, Withdrawal Management Counsellor, and others.

Graduates of the Mental Health and Addictions Worker program will be prepared for practice with individuals, families/kin and small groups who are impacted by addiction and mental health issues in a variety of community health and human services settings such as social and advocacy organizations, residential care facilities, outpatient care centres and community-based food, housing, emergency and other relief services.

VOCATIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Collaboratively assess wholistic needs with individuals, families and communities experiencing mental health and addiction challenges to honour self-determination and recognize the capacity for growth and resilience.
2. Develop a wholistic, trauma-informed and iterative care plan with the service user to meet their mental health and recovery goals within scope of practice.
3. Implement research, trauma and equity-informed treatment and prevention strategies in support of individual, family and/or community recovery and wellness goals.
4. Build professional and collaborative relationships with individuals, families, communities and colleagues to promote wholistic and culturally relevant mental health and addictions care.
5. Develop a critical self-reflection practice to support lifelong learning, professional growth and sustainable self-care.
6. Connect with community support networks to better assist service users in accessing and navigating various referral processes and care systems

7. Implement relational practices, including crisis response and critical incident management strategies, to safeguard self and others.
8. Conduct oneself in a professional and ethical manner while adhering to workplace policies and legislation relevant to scope of practice.
9. Advocate with individuals, families and community members to address systemic barriers that impact access to and quality of mental health and addictions care
10. record and file information within a case management model in compliance with confidentiality requirements and other documentation standards.

PROGRAM COURSES

The following reflects the planned course sequence for full-time offerings of the program. Programs at Northern College are delivered using a variety of instruction modes. Courses may be offered in the classroom or lab, entirely online, or in a hybrid mode which combines classroom sessions with virtual learning activities.

Semester 1		Hours
AM1003	The Role of Biology in MHA	42
AM1014	Professional Practice Skills	56
AM2023	Addressing Stigma in MHA	42
CM1323	Professional Communications	42
SW1014	Working on Teams and in Groups	42
SW1073	Understanding Power, Privilege & Oppression	42
SW3113	Working with Diverse Families	42
Semester 2		
AM1034	Clinical Practice Skills	56
AM2003	Social Policy and Legislation in MHA	42
AM2043	Integrated Approaches to MHA	42
CM2303	Communications in the Workplace	42
EL1041	General Education Elective	42
SW2073	Working with Indigenous Peoples	42
SW2083	Community Health and Development	42
Semester 3		
AM2033	Interviewing and Counselling Skills	42
AM3003	Preparation for Placement in MHA	42
AM3013	MHA Capstone	42
EL2041	General Education Elective	42
SW1093	Human Behaviour and the Social Environment	42
SW3123	Trauma-Informed Care and Crisis	42

SW3153 Interpersonal Violence

42

Semester 4

AM4002 Fieldwork Seminar

42

AM4003 Fieldwork Placement

580

PROGRAM PROGRESSION

The following reflects the planned progression for full-time offerings of the program.

Sem 1: Fall 2026

Sem 2: Winter 2027

Sem 3: Fall 2027

Sem 4: Winter 2028

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)
- Grade 12 English (C, U) (Minimum 60% GPA required)
- Or equivalent

Academic prerequisites for this program may be obtained free of charge through [Academic Upgrading](#).

For more details, please contact the Admissions Office at 705-235-7222 or admissions@northern.on.ca.

Additional Requirements for International Students

In addition to the admission requirements, international students must have proof of [English Proficiency](#) and meet the requirements below.

1. Proof of Senior High School Diploma/Certificate
2. English Proficiency (we will require one of the following):
 - IELTS Academic International English Language Testing System: minimum overall score of 6.0 must be achieved with no individual band score under 5.5
 - TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language): Computer-based overall minimum score of 79
 - PTE (Pearson Test of English) Academic – Graduate Diploma: 58+
 - Duolingo: 105+

If your country of citizenship has English as its official language, we may accept alternate proof of English Proficiency. All educational documents must be submitted in English and will be dependent on the country of citizenship. For more information, please contact admissions@northern.on.ca.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A passing grade of 60% is required for all Community Services core courses and electives. To succeed in this program, students must be highly motivated, highly committed and physically and mentally fit.

Work Integrated Learning Opportunities

Students complete an unpaid 580-hour fieldwork placement in their third semester of the program.

Fieldwork Placement Requirements

It is important to note that this program requires a fieldwork component. While the intent is for placements to be arranged in the student's own community. The fieldwork placement coordinator will be available to help with this process in the Timmins area and to authorize placements outside of the Timmins area. Should a valid fieldwork placement not be available in your community, alternate communities will need to be considered. Students are responsible for the costs of travel to and from field work placement sites, parking costs, etc. A dress code is in effect during all lab practice sessions and during the field work component of the programs.

In order to participate in fieldwork placement students must have successfully completed all of the courses in the program.

Each individual fieldwork placement agency may have specific requirements that make a student eligible to participate in fieldwork learning at their site.

Most agencies will require the following:

- A current Police Vulnerable Sector Check (Within 3 months of the start of their fieldwork placement)
- Vaccination records
- CPR/First Aid Training.
- WHMIS training

To be eligible for participation in field work practice in most settings, students must not have been convicted of any criminal offence for which that person has not been pardoned. An unpardoned criminal record will significantly decrease the number of available placement options.

Any costs for these tests/certifications will be the responsibility of the applicant.

In order to prepare you for fieldwork placement, you will be required to have a current resume and cover letter. Fieldwork placement (FWP) agencies may require additional documentation in order for you to begin FWP. The specific documents will be made known to you in your Preparation for Placement course.

Articulation / Transfer Agreements

A number of articulation agreements have been negotiated with universities and other institutions across Canada, North America and internationally. These agreements are assessed, revised and updated on a regular basis. Please contact the program coordinator for specific details if you are interested in pursuing such an option. Additional information can be found at [Articulation Agreements](#).

Pathways to Success

Northern has a partnership with Algoma University. Students who have completed a Social Service Worker diploma through Northern College can enter the Bachelor of Social Work Program with Algoma University. Students are eligible for up to 60 credits to be transferred into the BSW program, which consists of 120 credits overall. Please reach out to Tara Duclos for additional information: duclost@northern.on.ca.

Northern College also has a pathway agreement for students who have completed their Social Service Worker Diploma to enter the Community Economic and Social Development (CESD) Bachelor Program. Please reach out to Leah Blanchette, Leah.Blanchette@algomau.ca for more information.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- 15 Program Courses
- 2 Communications Courses
- 2 General Education Course

Graduation Eligibility

To graduate from this program, a student must attain a minimum of 60% or a letter grade of CR (Credit) in each course in each semester unless otherwise stated on the course outline. Students should consult departmental policies and manuals for additional details and exceptions.

Graduation Window

Students unable to adhere to the program duration of two years (as stated above) may take a maximum of four years to complete their credential. After this time, students must be re-admitted into the program and follow the curriculum in place at the time of re-admission.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions about being admitted into the program, please contact Northern College Admissions at admissions@northern.on.ca or by phone at 705-235-3211 ext. 7222. For questions about the content of the program, contact the Program Coordinator.

Lori Vachon, Program Coordinator
Tel: 705-235-3211 ext. 2141
Email: vachonl@northern.on.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Semester 1

AM1003 The Role of Biology in Addiction and Mental Health

In this course, students will explore current research, focused on genetic and epigenetic factors that may play a role in the development of addiction and mental health of individuals. Students will review the role of medication in supporting those living with addictions and mental health. By the end of this course, students will have an understanding of the many factors: biological, psychological and social factors that influence mental health and addiction.

AM1014 Professional Practice Skills

Through this course students will examine what it means to be an effective helping professional. Students will examine concepts such as the use of self as a helper and practice engaging in reflective practice while learning about ethical guidelines and practicing navigating ethical dilemmas in the field. Students will examine different models of practice as they relate to creating evidence-based helping relationships in the field. Students will determine how and when they should be involved with a client using various screening tools and helping with system navigation. The course will focus on mindful communication practice, focusing on effective oral and written communication, beginning interviewing skills, empathetic listening, paraphrasing, perception-checking, questioning and affirming as well as documenting appropriately. This course is designed with a two-hour lab component which allows students the opportunity to partner the theoretical aspect with the practical skills, which will enhance learning, interviewing skills, empathetic listening, paraphrasing, perception-checking, questioning and affirming.

AM2023 Addressing Stigma in Addiction and Mental Health Work

Challenging the stigma associated with addiction and mental health takes understanding, education and examines personal attitudes towards health. This course provides students with an in-depth exploration and analysis of the social construction of stigma relating to people with addiction and mental health issues. Students will focus on the causes, consequences and impacts of stigma at the micro, meso and macro levels, as well as multiple solutions to combat stigma. Students will have the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills by creating an anti-stigma initiative using the (AOP) lens, community outreach and engagement approaches.

CM1323 Professional Communications

In this course, students will learn essential skills for success in college and the workplace. This course focuses on developing and strengthening oral and written communication skills, and critical thinking ability. During this course, students will engage in a variety of forms of communication with a focus on upholding the principles of academic integrity. Students will develop the skills necessary to create discipline-specific documents, practice business etiquette and professionalism, and apply critical thinking strategies to practical scenarios. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to plan and draft concise, coherent and well-organized writing assignments that are tailored to specific audiences and purposes.

SW1014 Working on Teams and in Groups

This course will provide an interactive environment to enable students to develop group leadership and collaborative group work skills and to critically reflect on interprofessional teamwork. Students in this course will work with and in groups to explore theories relevant to group dynamics and group facilitation. Students will apply theories learned in a lab setting which will examine group dynamics, leadership styles, group conflict management as well as forming and facilitating groups.

SW1073 Understanding Power, Privilege & Oppression

Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) and Structural Social Work (STSW) are the philosophical basis for Northern College's Social Service Worker Program. In this course, students will begin to understand their own social location, the concepts of Privilege and Oppression and the impact of these on marginalized people with whom Social Service Workers work. The concept of "Private Troubles versus Public Problems" will assist students to understand their role in working to change systems that oppress people.

SW3113 Working with Diverse Families

This course will examine how to work with and support Canadian families in contemporary society. Using an anti-oppressive and structural lens: students will examine challenges that Canadian Families are facing and developing an awareness of the principles and values that guide human service practice with families. The many layers affecting families will be discussed, including (but not limited to); coupling, marriage, parenting, divorce and blended families. Students will be encouraged to examine their own family systems in light of the contemporary theories of family.

Semester 2**AM1034 Clinical Practice Skills**

This course is designed to build on the knowledge and skills acquired in professional practice skills. Students will expand their skills of system navigation. Through this course students will learn more formalized clinical practice skills that are used in supporting clients with the planned change process. In this course, students will develop the practical skills of assessment, planning, intervention, review and evaluation. Students will expand their communication skills while learning how to effectively complete assessments with clients experiencing a wide range of challenges. Students will also explore the benefits and challenges of using assessment tools and develop the skills to critically examine the shortcomings of these tools among specific populations, including Indigenous Peoples and culturally specific groups. Students will continue to expand their clinical writing skills and develop the skills required to complete a formalized assessment report. This course is designed with a two-hour lab component which allows students the opportunity to practice the skills being taught in order to enhance learning.

AM2003 Social Policy and Legislation in Addiction and Mental Health

Students will discuss social policies relating to addiction and mental health from a structural perspective. Students will explore the concept of personal troubles versus public issues. These analyses will assist the student to be able to access appropriate services for clients, as well as develop and implement services to address gaps.

AM2043 Integrated Approaches to Addiction and Mental Health Work

There is a tendency for addiction and mental health to be viewed separately from other areas such as trauma/violence as though they have unique causes and outcomes. Taking an integrated perspective not only improves the student's understanding of addiction but also invites them to understand collaboration across disciplines rather than in silos. In this course, students will begin to link theory with practice in addiction and mental health work, demonstrating that how one understands addictions will determine the response to it. Students will reflect on their own "theories" of addiction and mental health and will use this self-reflection as a starting point for discussion of key theoretical frameworks in the addiction and mental health field. Students will describe and examine their theories using the anti-oppressive approach. Students will apply their self-reflection and learning to include a multidimensional theory of addiction and mental health that takes into account biological, psychological, social and structural factors. Students will be able to apply addiction and mental health within a number of intersecting causes and influences with a range of individual, social and social-structural interventions and possible responses.

CM2303 Communications in the Workplace

In this course, students will develop professional communication skills required for success in the workplace. Students will continue to develop and strengthen their oral and written communication skills and critical thinking abilities. During this course, students will use various modes of communication to complete assignments designed to meet program and professional expectations. Students will utilize a variety of technologies for the purpose of creating a professional presence in a digital environment. Students will develop the necessary skills to create polished workplace documents such as letters, resumes, cover letters and reports tailored to specific audiences. Students will learn to conduct themselves with professionalism in both workplace interviews and job searches. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to create clear, concise and coherent workplace and employment documents that are error-free and designed for specific audiences and purposes.

EL1041 General Education Elective

General Education Courses are selected online each semester by the student from a list provided and exposes students to a related area of study outside of their immediate academic discipline. Certain programs have predetermined electives.

SW2073 Working with Indigenous Peoples

This course is intended to assist the student to develop the capacity to work with Indigenous individuals, families, groups and communities. Students will examine the impacts of trauma and colonization for Indigenous peoples and communities by gaining an in-depth understanding of the residential school system, the 60s's scoop and intergenerational trauma. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to identify culturally safe practice considerations and assist in the development of holistic healing plans that incorporate appropriate cultural resources. Students will connect the concepts learned in two other courses: Trauma-Informed Care and Crisis; and Understanding Power, Privilege and Oppression in Social Service Work to this course in order to be able to build meaningful relationships with Indigenous individuals, family and communities while recognizing the impact of their own privilege on these relationships.

SW2083 Community Health and Development

The importance of Social Service Workers being able to navigate and work within communities at a macro level is imperative to the human services field. This course is designed to introduce students to the fundamental concepts and theories used within community organization and development. Community service learning is incorporated where students will do an analysis of the health of their community (using the social determinants of health as a guide. Based on the results students will develop a plan to address their findings, using a structural and anti-oppressive lens to inform their work.

Semester 3**AM2033 Interviewing and Counselling Skills**

This integrated course is designed to provide students the opportunity to practice the skills learned in Professional Practice Skills and Clinical Practice Skills. It is offered in an intensive four-day format where students are immersed in an interactive setting in which theory can be applied directly in a safe and comfortable learning environment. Students will enrich their ability to screen, build helping relationships, assess and support clients in making change through in-class simulations and case studies. In this course,

students will also have the opportunity to critically reflect on their progress thus far and develop goals moving forward in the program.

AM3003 Preparation for Placement in Addiction and Mental Health

The aim of this course is to prepare students for success as a professional Addiction and Mental Health Worker. This course will be interactive in providing students with opportunities to explore resources currently available in our community to support their success as a Mental Health and Addiction Worker. Students will define their learning styles and develop their own student success plan which will include self-care strategies, and approaches to prevent compassion fatigue and burn out. Students will explore the policies and practice procedures that will help prepare them for Field Placement. Students will learn about professional competencies required for Field Placement and required for employment as an Addiction and Mental Health Worker. Important themes that will be addressed will be workplace safety, de-escalation, suicide prevention and positive client engagement and collaboration.

AM3013 Addictions and Mental Health Capstone

Students will explore specific populations and key issues in the field of addictions and mental health. Students will work in small groups to explore special populations and share the information with their peers. These populations include women (including pregnant women); older adults; youth; Indigenous people; LGBTTTIQ/Q communities; racialized communities; new Canadians; differently-abled individuals; those who are homeless; people with concurrent disorders, dual diagnosis, PTSD and survivors of interpersonal trauma/violence. This capstone course will be the vehicle for students to pull together all of the learning in the program, including theory, practice, group work skills and community engagement strategies to develop and present their project.

EL2041 General Education Elective

General Education Courses are selected online each semester by the student from a list provided and exposes students to a related area of study outside of their immediate academic discipline. Certain programs have predetermined electives.

SW1093 Human Behaviour and the Social Environment

This course explores human development across the life span in the context of bio-psycho-social influences, including theories and knowledge about the range of social systems in which individuals live and diversity of human behaviour throughout the life cycle. Students will develop an understanding of the interactions between and among biophysical, social, psychological, and cultural systems as they affect human development and shape individual values, beliefs, worldviews and identities.

SW3123 Trauma-Informed Care and Crisis

This course is designed to introduce students to a variety of concepts related to trauma, trauma informed practice, crisis, and crisis intervention. Students will adopt a trauma informed perspective as part of their Social Service Worker practice. Through case studies and role plays, students will learn how to employ crisis intervention skills in a culturally appropriate manner. This course will build on the micro skills that students have acquired in SSW Practice I, SSW Practice II and SSW Practice II Lab. Students will have the unique opportunity to apply their skills in different mock crisis situations.

SW3153 Interpersonal Violence

This course focuses on the historical, social and cultural contexts of interpersonal violence in Canada. Students will acquire a broad understanding of child abuse and neglect, violence against women and members of the LGBTQ+ community, and intimate partner violence. This knowledge will then be applied to social service work interventions. In this course, students will also explore the social challenges of reducing and ultimately preventing interpersonal violence in the future.

Semester 4**AM4002 Fieldwork Seminar**

This course is a co-requisite of Fieldwork Placement. While on placement, students will attend four Seminar days. This in-class experience provides the opportunity to critically analyze the experiences that are occurring in the field. Students begin to understand the delicate balance between what they have learned in the classroom (theory, skills), the needs of clients and the requirements of agencies. Self-care will be emphasized as students transition from the role of student to that of entry-level professional.

AM4003 Fieldwork Placement

This is a cooperative endeavor between the College Addiction and Mental Health Worker Program and various community agencies. Students are placed in agencies under supervision for a 580-hour duration. The objective is to provide students with a practical opportunity as a professional in training to integrate and apply entry-level knowledge, values, and skills, while actively participating in the activities of the agency with staff and clients.