

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Academic Year:	2026-2027
Credential:	Ontario College Diploma
Program Delivery:	Full-Time
Duration:	2 Years
Length:	4 Semesters
Program Code(s):	A007 - Timmins Campus (PC) A104 - Distance (CK)

DESCRIPTION

The Social Service Worker diploma is a two-year diploma program. Students will graduate ready to help individuals, families, and communities as they cope with and work through some of life's most stressful events. Through an anti-oppressive lens, the evidence-based curriculum delves into current social issues impacting our communities and provides students with the necessary interpersonal skills required to build and maintain relationships. Students will develop verbal and written communication skills necessary to effectively engage service users in culturally appropriate, person-centered approaches.

In our program, students are given opportunities to put theory into practice, using a collaborative approach, combined with professional labs. The final semester of the program is a 15-week placement in a social service agency. Social Service Workers focus on promoting equity and addressing oppression that people face based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality, or age. Social Service Workers in our program will use their knowledge of systemic oppression, colonialism, and trauma to better understand the complexities inherent to the field of social services. Our program prepares students to work with people from diverse backgrounds who are experiencing stressful events in their lives from an anti-oppressive, trauma-informed perspective.

Social Service Worker Distance (A104)

Our distance Social Service Worker Program is offered completely online (A104). Important information to know before deciding if our online program is right for you:

- Our SSW distance program is delivered through synchronous teaching (i.e., classes are scheduled throughout the week and students are expected to attend as scheduled). 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 our 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 as well as allow instructors to assess expected course outcomes.
- Our distance students can do their placements in their city/town of their choice. Students are responsible for finding and securing their own placements. These placements will be approved by the placement coordinator prior to a student accepting. Placements are completed in the last semester of our program.

Our Social Service Worker program is rewarding yet challenging. There are opportunities for students to complete the program on a part-time basis.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Social Service Workers are commonly employed by government agencies and social service agencies. Graduates are eligible to register with Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. Web site: <http://www.ocswssw.org/>.

- Social service worker
- Employed by social service and government agencies, mental health agencies, group homes, shelters, substance abuse centres, school boards, and correctional facilities.

VOCATIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Develop respectful and collaborative professional and interpersonal relationships that adhere to professional, legal, and ethical standards aligned to social service work.
2. Record information accurately and communicate effectively in written, digital, verbal and non-verbal ways, in adherence to privacy and freedom of information legislation, in accordance with professional and workplace standards.
3. Integrate a practice framework within a service delivery continuum, addressing the needs of individuals, families and communities at micro, mezzo, macro and global levels, and work with them in achieving their goals.
4. Plan and implement accessible and responsive programs and services, recognizing the diverse needs and experiences of individuals, groups, families and communities, and meeting these needs.
5. Examine current social policy, relevant legislation, and political, social, historical, and/or economic systems and their impacts for individuals and communities when delivering services to the user/client.
6. Develop strategies and approaches that support individual clients, groups, families and communities in building the capacity for self-advocacy, while affirming their dignity and self-worth.
7. Work from an anti-oppressive, strengths-based practice, recognizing the capacity for resilience and growth of individuals and communities when responding to the diverse needs of marginalized or vulnerable populations to act as allies and advocates.
8. Develop strategies and approaches to implement and maintain holistic self-care as a member of a human service profession.
9. Work with individuals, groups, families and their communities to ensure that service provider strategies promote social and economic justice, and challenge patterns of oppression, discrimination and harassment, and sexual violence with clients, coworkers and communities.
10. Develop the capacity to work with the Indigenous individual, families, groups and communities while respecting their inherent rights to self-determine, and to identify and address systemic barriers that produce ill-effects, developing appropriate responses using approaches such as trauma informed care practice.

PROGRAM COURSES

The following reflects the planned course sequence for full-time offerings of the program for Fall 2025 intake. 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. Please note, courses offered online are synchronous.

Semester 1		Hours
AM1014	Professional Practice Skills	56
CM1323	Professional Communications	42
EL1041	General Education Elective	42
SW1014	Working on Teams and in Groups	56
SW1063	Introduction to Social Welfare in Canada	42
SW1073	Understanding Power, Privilege & Oppression	42
SW3113	Working with Diverse Families	42
Semester 2		
AM1034	Clinical Practice Skills	56
CM2303	Communications in the Workplace	42
SW2073	Working with Indigenous Peoples	42
SW2083	Community Health and Development	42
SW2093	Social Policy and Legislation in Social Service Work	42
SW2103	Social Problems in a Diverse Society	42
SW3103	Interprofessional Collaboration	42
Semester 3		
AM2033	Interviewing and Counselling Skills	
EL1042	General Education Elective	42
SW1093	Human Behaviour and the Social Environment	42
SW3093	Preparation for Placement	42
SW3123	Trauma-Informed Care and Crisis	42
SW3133	Addiction and Mental Health	42
SW3153	Interpersonal Violence	42
Semester 4		
SW4041	SSW Fieldwork Placement	500
SW4051	SSW Fieldwork Seminar	28

PROGRAM PROGRESSION

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

Fall Intake

Sem 1: Fall 2026
Sem 2: Winter 2027
Sem 3: Fall 2027
Sem 4: Winter 2028

Winter Intake

Sem 1: Winter 2027
Sem 2: Fall 2027
Sem 3: Winter 2028
Sem 4: Summer 2028

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or equivalent
- Grade 12 English (C, U) (Minimum 60% GPA required) or equivalent
- Computer proficiency in Microsoft Office (word processing), web search engines and e-mail systems.

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

Applicants who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent and will have reached the age of 19 years on or before the start of the program must undergo academic testing and may be required to complete [Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition \(PLAR\)](#) process to demonstrate equivalency of admission requirements prior to admission into a program.

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+
3. CO-OP Work Permit is mandatory for this program to participate in unpaid program placements.

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

This program requires a fieldwork component.

Fieldwork Placement Requirements

- A current Police Vulnerable Sector screening: Applicants can expect to wait a minimum of 6-8 weeks to receive a Police Check.
- A recent criminal/vulnerable sector reference check – (within 3 months) may be required in Semester II of the program prior to the start of classes in January.

To be eligible for participation in field work practice, students must not have been convicted of any criminal offence for which that person has not been pardoned. An unpardoned criminal record may result in inability to participate in fieldwork practice courses and will prevent the student from graduating. 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 Reflective Practice course.

While the intent is for placements to be arranged in the student's own community, when this is not possible, alternate communities will need to be considered. Students are responsible for the costs of travel to and from fieldwork placement sites, parking costs, etc. A dress code is in effect during all lab practice sessions and during the fieldwork component of the programs. All theory and lab course work must be successfully completed prior to field work placements.

Provincial Registration

In order to practice in Ontario as a "Social Service Worker" or a "Registered Social Service Worker", graduates must apply for registration in the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW). Graduates of the SSW program will meet the education requirement for registration. For more information, please visit ocswssw.org.

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 College 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 Development Program (CDEV). Please reach out to Leah Blanchette, Leah.Blanchette@algomau.ca for more information.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- 20 Program Courses
- 2 Communications Courses
- 2 General Education Courses

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.

Tara Duclos, Program Coordinator
Tel: 705-235-3211 ext. 2138
Email: duclost@northern.on.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Semester 1

AM1014 Professional Practice Skills

Students will examine different models of practice as they relate to mental health and addiction. Students will engage in critical self reflection to build awareness and appreciation of how power differentials, internalized oppression and social location all influence interactions. A focus on mindful communication practices will be emphasized with a specific focus on anti-oppressive and collaborative communication. Students will learn the models of practice, focusing on effective communication, beginning interviewing skills, empathetic listening, paraphrasing, perception checking, questioning and affirming.

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.

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.

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.

SW1063 Introduction to Social Welfare in Canada

In this course, students will study the historical, theoretical and philosophical frameworks that underpin Social Welfare in Canada. Students will study the Indigenous, French and English traditions that have led to the current social safety net in Canada. Students will begin their journey to becoming Social Service Workers by exploring the different models used to work with individuals, families and groups, as well as the fields of Social Service Work available to them after graduation.

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 develop 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.

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.

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.

SW2093 Social Policy and Legislation in Social Service Work

Social Service Workers interact with social policy and legislation that impacts vulnerable and oppressed people on a daily basis. This course will provide students the opportunity to learn about government structure, political ideology, social policy and legislation in Canada. These concepts will be viewed through the lens of Anti-Oppressive Practice with a view to learning how to make structural changes that improve life conditions for marginalized groups.

SW2103 Social Problems in a Diverse Society

This course uses sociological perspectives to introduce students to specific social concerns in Canada ranging from poverty, drug addiction, and racism to inequalities based on age, gender, ability, and sexual orientation. Students will examine social problems from both individual and institutional perspectives, while considering their persistence. Historically and currently employed strategies to improve social conditions will be addressed.

SW3103 Interprofessional Collaboration

Social Service Workers perform a variety of roles in diverse occupational settings in which they are expected to work collaboratively with other professionals from other fields of study. Using a variety of current theoretical frameworks, this course will introduce students to the daunting task of interprofessional practice within the field of social services. This course is designed to help students understand how profession-driven differences can cause difficulties and challenges to interprofessional collaboration. Additionally, in this course, students will develop the skills necessary to overcome some of these challenges and engage in effective interprofessional collaborative practice.

Semester 3**AM2033 Interviewing and Counselling Skills**

Students began to learn about intervention skills in the first semester in Professional Practice Skills. This course provides the opportunity to practice these skills while continuing to enhance the understanding of work at the micro, mezzo and macro levels of practice, with individuals, families, groups and community. Students will enrich their ability to screen, assess and case manage through in class simulations and case studies. Students will learn to manage risk, determine needs and intervene during crisis. Self-reflection and professionalism will be emphasized throughout the learning process.

EL1042 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.

SW3093 Preparation for Placement

This course is designed to assist students to prepare for and secure a placement. Students will continue their journey of self-awareness, self-reflection and professional growth as Anti-Oppressive Social Service Workers. Students will learn the importance of fieldwork placement as a tool to blend real life experience with the theory they have learned in the classroom.

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 microskills 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.

SW3133 Addiction and Mental Health

Concurrent Disorders is a term used to describe cases where a person is struggling with both mental health and substance abuse. People who are struggling with mental health are significantly more likely to abuse substances. The inverse is also true, making it paramount that students learn how to work with and support this population. This course will introduce students to the nature of concurrent disorders; discuss competencies related to inter-professional collaboration and explore cultural and societal influences that impact people experiencing concurrent disorders. Students will have an opportunity to hear from experts in the field and participate in activities to help build their own capacity to be able to work with those affected by co-occurring disorders.

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**SW4041 SSW Fieldwork Placement**

This is a cooperative endeavor between the College SSW program and various community social services agencies. Students are placed in agencies under supervision of the agency and partnered with a member of the college faculty team for a 15-week/500-hour duration. The final grade will be determined by the faculty member through regular interaction with both the student and workplace supervisor. The objective is to provide students with a practical opportunity to integrate and apply entry-level knowledge of practice theories and models compatible with the philosophical basis of Anti-Oppressive Practice and Structural Social Work, utilizing core values and skills.

SW4051 SSW Fieldwork Seminar

Students, while on work placement, will have a variety of experiences in agency settings, child welfare, mental health, custody settings, health care settings, government and municipal services, school settings, etc. They will work to solidify and practice a variety of critical skills, professional relationship building, interventions, counselling approaches, self-evaluation, self-care, and professional development. Students will take part in Fieldwork Seminars one day a month throughout the placement in order to integrate their experiences in the field with the theories they learned in the classroom.