leadership adders: 
STEPS TO A GREAT CAREER IN SOCIAL WORK

the value of dual degrees

Social workers who are interested in moving into positions with more responsibility and greater leadership potential may benefit from holding dual degrees. Dual degree programs are designed to provide social work students with two degrees upon graduation. These are separate and distinct degrees, and the recipients may market themselves as having both a social work and other degree, such as law, public health, business, public administration, and divinity. (Jayaratne, S. 2008).

WHAT DO PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW WHEN APPLYING TO A DUAL DEGREE PROGRAM?

Even though MSW dual degree programs have existed for at least a couple of decades, it has only been with in the past three to four years that data about these programs has been collected. Recent data collected by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), identifies at least seventy-eight MSW programs nationwide that offer dual degrees (Reardon, C., 2009). The most likely MSW dual degree programs pair a social work degree with degrees in law, public health, divinity, and business administration. However, there is an increase in dual degree programs in social work graduate programs. These programs are open to qualified students who simultaneously matriculate in a graduate school social work program and another graduate degree area. Some common elements of dual degree programs are:

» They offer two degrees simultaneously.

Council on Social Work Education
National Association of Social Workers
750 First Street NE, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20002-4241

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WHY DO PEOPLE WANT DUAL DEGREES?
- Dual degrees increase flexibility and choices in the job market.
- Dual degrees contribute to a more competitive résumé.
- Individuals and their employers benefit from the multiple skills and knowledge provided by two degrees (Miller, S., Hopkins, K., Grief, G., 2008).

WHAT DO PEOPLE NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN LOOKING AT DUAL DEGREE PROGRAMS?
- Carefully consider career goals before beginning a program. How will a dual degree affect those goals?
- Do the research related to your career goals, such as talking to faculty, students, and alumni of the dual degree program that interests you. These same contacts may be possible mentors.
- Make an accurate financial plan to cover the costs of a dual degree program.
- Access personal time management skills. There is more information to absorb in a dual degree program.

WHAT ARE JOB POSSIBILITIES?
Graduates of dual degree programs, such as social work and law, business, public administration, public health are often in leadership positions in the public and not-for-profit sector. They also hold management positions, such as executive director, vice president, director, in their employment settings.

REFERENCES

Miller, S., Hopkins, K., Grief, G., (2008). Dual degree social work programs: where are the programs and where are the graduates? Advances in Social Work, 9, 29-43.


RESOURCE
Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) at www.cswe.org/
CSWE accredits schools of social work programs throughout the nation and maintains data on social work education and programs.