

MSW alum supports people with HIV in North Dakota

October 07, 2025 10:30 AM Stephanie Holden
sholden1@tulane.edu



Kara Gloe, LICSW

Kara Gloe's high school nickname was Counselor Kara. At 39, she decided to make that a reality. In 2021, Gloe graduated from Tulane with a [Master of Social Work \(MSW\)](#) and a [focus area](#) in Mental Health, Addiction, and the Family.

With two small children at home and a whole life established in North Dakota, Gloe studied online through night classes. "I wanted a top-quality program that would get me into the work in a reasonable amount of time," she said.

Gloe says that several people helped keep her on track during her MSW program. Her spouse kept her fed and took care of the kids during class, and her sister, who had recently graduated from nursing school, gave her a piece of advice that applied to more than just her classwork: "Be the Kara now that tomorrow's Kara will appreciate."

Other therapists, professors, and mentors also provided comfort and guidance – personally and professionally.

"My professors at Tulane modeled a wide variety of ways to practice clinically and challenged us to think and engage intersectionally," Gloe said. "They challenged us to be more thoughtful and analytical. I was frequently uncomfortable during the program, because growth is often uncomfortable. There were books and discussions that I knew were changing me permanently while I was engaging with them."

The classes Gloe took as part of her MSW curriculum prepared her for clinical practice, from DSM diagnostics to development across the lifespan. "All of this," she said, "has not only benefited me professionally but also made me a better mother, partner, and friend."

Now, Gloe works primarily with LGBTQ+ communities and patients living with HIV. Outside of individual therapy, her efforts include working to decriminalize HIV in North Dakota and developing the state's first peer support program for those living with HIV.

"My clients have taught me that we all carry something, and far too often it's pretty heavy trauma. They have also hammered home just how inequitable our systems are. Sometimes, what people need above all else, including evidence-based treatment modalities, is someone who cares, consistently shows up, and listens."

Gloe says nothing compares to watching her clients grow, begin to give themselves credit for the amazing things they've done, and build up their self-compassion. That's why she continues to learn and grow as a social worker. Right now, she's working toward becoming certified by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH).

"I really enjoy opportunities to learn more, especially when that learning brings specific clients to mind. Then, I can't wait to bring it back for them," Gloe said.

Caring about and learning to understand people, Gloe says, is what social work is all about. Her advice for budding social workers? Empathy and open-mindedness are everything.

"I want social work students to know the world needs you. You don't need to be perfect. You need to be able to develop human connections, have empathy, and show up. The rest is gravy."

You don't need to be perfect. You need to be able to develop human connections, have empathy, and show up.

Kara Gloe, LICSW