

# Student studies depression in the workplace

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Alex Fixler, a student in the Tulane Master of Social Work program, is the recipient of a yearlong \$10,000 grant from Policy Research Inc., which is funded by the Social Security Administration's Disability Determination Small Grant Program. (Photo by Joe Halm)

Roughly 1 million people in the United States are on disability for mental health reasons, and Alex Fixler, a student in the Tulane School of Social Work, is working to help reduce that number.

In July, Fixler was awarded a yearlong \$10,000 grant from Policy Research Inc., which is funded by the Social Security Administration's Disability Determination Small Grant Program.

The grant will be used to explore early interventions that help people with disorders such as major depression stay in the workforce, have more productive and satisfying lives, and not become permanently disabled.

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*Alex Fixler*

Tulane University

According to the World Health Organization, major depressive disorder is the most prevalent global disability and accounts for nearly half of lost workplace productivity in America.

“An early intervention program could help people stay engaged in meaningful work experiences and get the help they need to prevent a life of disability and disconnection,” said Fixler. “I think such a program could ultimately extend the reach of services to almost anyone who experiences depression in America, not only those who are on the path to being disabled by it.”

Fixler’s project is one of eight selected from across the country. She is the only master’s level social work student to earn the grant with other awards going to doctoral candidates.

“The ultimate goal of my research is to find ways to use resources sooner and more effectively,” said Fixler. “I want to help people with mental health issues stay in the workforce and have a higher quality of life.”