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FIELD PLACEMENT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

The field placement experience offers students an opportunity for learning about social problems, social welfare, organizations, diverse client groups, communities and resources, and issues that are psychosocial in nature. This occurs in an agency-based setting with supervision by an approved and credentialed social work field instructor. The field placement is an opportunity for students to add breadth and depth to their previous experience and also a time to explore a new area or field of study. The field placement is an integral part of the BSW and MSW programs and has strict standards from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) that must be adhered to. The School of Social Work does not grant credit for current or past work experience or life experience. (CSWE standard 3.2.5).

THE FIELD APPLICATION PROCESS

BSW students complete the required 400-hour field placement their senior year during the fall/spring or spring/summer I concurrent with required course work and only after having met the prerequisites. Full Time and Extended Study MSW students are required to complete two field placements (900 hours total) during the fall and spring semesters concurrent with required course work and only after having met prerequisites. The MSW field placements are to be completed in consecutive years. Advanced Standing MSW students complete their field placement for 500 total hours during fall and spring semesters.

All students are required to complete an application for field placement, which is submitted to the Office of Field Education. The coordinator of field education is responsible for implementing the placement plan. The field application is very detailed and is utilized by the agency field instructor when interviewing the student during the placement process. The application includes a skills check list, a liability statement, a release of information form, agency preference form, narrative questions (that must be typed), and a resume.

If the field application is not submitted in its entirety by the identified deadline, the student may not be assigned to an agency until the students who did meet the deadline are assigned and have completed their interviews. The coordinator of field education will review the application. Students will be asked to complete a form that identifies a list of agencies where they are interested in completing their field placement. Prior to submitting the application to the office of field education, students should use the Agency Search function of the Field Website at http://www.wmich.edu/hhs/sw/field/index.htm to explore agencies that have already entered into a partnership with the School of Social Work as an accepted field placement site and then list at least three agencies of interest on the Agency Preference Form.

The coordinator of field education will make every attempt to match each student to one of their preferred agencies for placement while giving consideration to agency requests and capacity. Many students scheduled to enter field in the fall or summer II semesters will have their placement confirmed by early April. Many BSW students who are to begin
their placements in the spring semester will have their placements confirmed by mid to late November.

If students have an idea for a potential field placement that is not currently on the list of approved agencies, they may make a preliminary initial contact with the agency and then forward that information the field coordinator. The field coordinator will take appropriate steps to determine if the placement is viable.

The interview process allows the students to practice job interviewing, to meet and be evaluated by a potential field instructor, to learn about the agency expectations, and become familiar with the functions of the agency. It also gives the field instructor the opportunity to determine if the student would meet the needs and standards of the agency.

All students must successfully interview and be selected for placement by an agency field instructor. If an agency representative declines the student after an interview, if the student declines an offer for a placement, or if both the agency and the student do not believe that the placement would be a good “fit”, the student will be required to discuss the reasons that the placement was not workable with the field coordinator. Additional agencies will be identified by the field coordinator based on placement availability and appropriateness of fit.

Western Michigan University School of Social Work policy indicates that students who are not offered a placement after three agency interviews for reasons related to their appropriateness or readiness for internship will be referred to the Professional Review Committee (PRC) for evaluation and problem solving. This could result in a recommendation that the student be terminated from the School of Social Work program.

FAMILY EDUCATION RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA):

The Office of Field Education may share all relevant information with appropriate persons who may include the faculty liaison, the agency field instructor, the student’s academic advisor, the director of Admissions of the School of Social Work, or the director of the School of Social Work. Relevant information is defined as information that may involve the field placement selection, clients, agency field instructors, staff, the student learning experience, or school policy. Such information will be shared to enable informed choice by field instructors, protect clients, protect students, and facilitate the learning process. Agency field instructors are also expected to share relevant information with the Office of Field Education. The student will be required to sign a release of information form as part of their field application (See appendix E). This release includes academic record (directory and non-directory information), all contents of the field application, and previous evaluations from previous field education experiences. This release gives the field office permission to release the above information to agencies with whom the student may interview and/or be placed.

EMPLOYED STUDENTS

Students who are employed need to be particularly aware that they must be able to commit the requisite number of field hours per work week to their field placement. Completing the field placement is a big commitment and requires upfront planning by the
students and his/her employer. Students should start working with their employers early on to develop a plan to change their work schedule by either modifying their schedule during the week or utilizing vacation time so that the field hours can be accomplished during the work week. Field placement agencies that are able to provide learning opportunities and supervision for a student in the evenings and on the weekends are limited.

Employed students may want to consult with their field instructor and faculty liaison regarding stretching their field hours beyond the semesters they are registered for. See Field Hours sub-section under the BSW and MSW sections regarding extensions in the field placement.

THE EMPLOYMENT-BASED PLACEMENT OPTION

Students who are employed in a health and human services agency may wish to explore the “employment-based placement” option for their required field placements. Employment-based placement proposal guidelines are available in the appendix E.4 and E.5 of the field manual. This a proposal to complete a field placement in the agency where a student is employed. A student’s employment-based placement must place the student in an entirely new role and capacity with a different person other than their supervisor functioning as their field instructor.

The employment-based placement proposal must demonstrate that educational time will be protected and that the educational and learning objectives of the fieldwork will be accomplished. Arrangements for any wages received by the student for the hours of field education per week are strictly between the student and the employer.

STUDENT REIMBURSEMENT

While agencies are not required to financially compensate students for field placement, the Office of Field Education encourages agencies to provide funds to students when possible. Such arrangements are strictly based upon negotiations between the agency and the student. If agency staff is reimbursed for travel, it is encouraged that the student will benefit from the same agency policies.

THE PLACEMENT CONTINUATION OPTION

At times, agencies may invite a student to perform a second field placement with them. This is a compliment to the student’s performance in their first year of field education with the agency. If the student is interested in accepting this offer, they must submit a proposal to do so to the Coordinator of Field Education. The purpose of the proposal is to ensure that the student’s learning and educational objectives are the central foci involved in the consideration of a placement continuation.

In order to meet the Council on Social Work Education requirements, the placement continuation proposal must demonstrate that the educational and learning objectives of the fieldwork will be accomplished at an advanced level of competency in an area of concentration other than the student’s previous placement with the agency.
The Placement Continuation Guidelines can be found in Appendix E.6. Sample Continuation Proposals can be found in Appendix E.7.

INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL, & BLOCK FIELD PLACEMENTS

The Office of Field Instruction develops limited international, national, and block (40 hours/week) field placements with students. All placements must correspond to the methods and practice areas of the curriculum and provide appropriate fieldwork experiences. International, national, and block placements are approved on an individual basis by the Coordinator of Field Education to insure that the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accreditation and field curriculum standards are met including:

- Students receive professional level social work supervision in core competencies.
- Supervisor credentialing information is provided.
- Agency Affiliation Agreement is signed.
- Course work is integrated into the field education experience.
- Field learning contract and evaluation are utilized.
- Student safety checklist is utilized.

Students interested in an international, national, and/or a block placement should contact the Director of Student Services and the Coordinator of Field Education immediately upon admission to the School of Social Work. Extensive course planning and scheduling is involved and takes approximately six months longer than traditional field placement planning.

An international, national, and/or block placement may have implications for the student’s financial aid and curriculum schedule. All arrangements for funding, travel, lodging, food, and other living expenses related to the field placement are the responsibility of the student. The student must work closely with the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education when pursuing an international placement.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Students may pursue different specializations and certifications in addition to their regular curriculum. All students are responsible for making application to the specific programs and completing all program requirements. Some of the certificates require a field placement experience that is concurrent and that can be coordinated with the required social work field placement. Students should indicate on their field application if they are pursuing an additional certificate or credential. Basic information on the certificates is listed below.

School Social Work

The school social work certification program assists MSW students in meeting the criteria for certification as a school social worker in the State of Michigan. The State of Michigan Board of Education requires students to take certain courses as outlined in the MSW Student Handbook http://www.wmich.edu/hhs/sw/graduate/The%20Graduate%20Student%20Handbook%202009-10.pdf In addition, the state requires that the student successfully complete a 500-hour field placement working primarily with children and families, preferably in a
school setting. This placement may occur during the first or second year of the master field placement. Requirements vary for school certification from state to state. Students need to research state requirements if they plan to relocate after graduation.

**Specialty Program in Alcohol and Drug Abuse (SPADA)**
SPADA is a certificate program that prepares students and working professionals to function and deal more effectively with substance abuse issues and problems. The program addresses prevention, community education, assessment, treatment, clinical supervision, program management, evaluation, and rehabilitation. More information is available at http://www.wmich.edu/hhs/spada/

Master’s students who are completing their SPADA certification may do a dual placement that satisfies the requirements of both SPADA and the School of Social Work. Students can complete the field placement requirement in their foundation or concentration year by being placed in a setting that primarily focuses on substance abuse. However, many treatment settings prefer that the student complete their field placement during the second year of the master program if the student has limited practice experience.

**Holistic Health**
This certification program is one of only a few such programs in the country. It focuses on holistic health theory and research from a promotion, prevention, and treatment perspective. Opportunities for advanced training within the program exist in areas including stress management, nutrition and lifestyle, illness and healing, and self-regulation. For more information, please visit the Holistic Health webpage http://www.wmich.edu/hhs/holistic_health/

Master’s students who are completing their Holistic Health certification may do a dual placement that satisfies the requirements of both Holistic Health and the School of Social Work during their foundation or concentration year by being placed in a setting that utilizes holistic health theories and methodologies. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that all requirements are met for both programs.

**TIME AND ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS**
Attendance in field placement is a beginning benchmark of the developing professional social worker. Students should treat their agency and agency expectations as they would a formal job. If a student is not going to be able to go to their field placement for a legitimate reason, the field instructor should be notified and a plan to make the hours up should be initiated. Field instructors are encouraged to notify the faculty liaison immediately if there are issues surrounding the attendance of the student in the field placement. A sample time log that can help keep track of the student’s hours can be found in appendix D.4.

If, at the end of the semester/session, a student more than 16 hours short of the required number of hours, the following steps must be taken:

1. The faculty liaison should issue a grade of incomplete for the semester/session (which is replaced by the liaison at the completion of the hours).
2. The student must submit a written plan signed by the field instructor, the
student, and the faculty liaison addressing how and by when field hours will be
completed.

If a student is requesting to attend their field placements between semesters or beyond
the final semester of field for educational reasons, the following steps must be taken:

1. The student must file a Field Extension Request with the Field Coordinator
following the format in appendix D.6 of the field manual to ensure coverage for
the student under the university liability insurance policy.
2. The Field Coordinator forwards the request to the university business office
and files a copy in the field office.

During extensions of a field placement, the Field Coordinator or the Assistant to
the Field Coordinator will serve as the faculty liaison for the student and the
agency unless other arrangements are made with the faculty liaison.

BSW Students

CSWE requires BSW students to complete a minimum of 400 total hours for the
academic year. BSW students begin field placement in the senior year selecting a two-
semester experience in the fall/spring or spring/summer I sessions. Fall and spring field
placement requires approximately a 16-hour per work week commitment, the spring and
summer I require a 16 and 29-hour work week commitment respectively for a total of 400
hours. The idea is to log approximately 16 (or 29 depending on the semester/session
enrolled in) hours per week to allow for a full range of learning experiences over time
which should go until the end of the semester/session. It is important for these learning
experiences to build over the course of each semester. Students are encouraged to log
a few additional hours to cover an unexpected absence or an illness, but the bulk of the
required hours must be logged continuously over the course of the semester(s).

Refer to the BSW section of the manual for information about the required field
laboratories and field seminars.

MSW Students

CSWE requires that MSW students complete a minimum of 900 total hours of field
placement.

• To meet the CSWE requirements, the School of Social Work requires
that MSW foundation students complete a minimum of 428 total hours.
(Students completing the school social work certificate in Michigan
are required to complete 500 hours of field placement in a setting
working with families and children.)

• To meet the CSWE requirements, the School of Social Work requires
that MSW concentration (IP or PP&A) students are required to
complete a minimum of 472 total hours (Students completing the
school social work certificate in Michigan are required to complete 500
hours of field placement in a setting working with families and children).

- To meet the CSWE requirements, the School of Social Work requires that Advanced Standing MSW students (who have had a previous BSW field placement) are required to complete a minimum of 500 total hours in their MSW Concentration placement.

Students are encouraged to log a few additional hours to cover any unexpected absence or an illness, but the bulk of the required hours must be logged continuously over the course of the semester(s). Meal breaks and commuting time to and from the placement site do not count as field hours.

Refer to the MSW foundation & concentration sections of the manual for information about the required field laboratories, field hours, and field seminars.

UNIVERSITY BREAK PERIODS

The University has an established calendar of holidays and break periods and students are not required to be in field placement during these periods. Students should address this with potential field instructors during the interview process in consideration of client and agency needs.

University calendars are available on the web at http://www.wmich.edu/registrar/calendars/index.html

Official University holidays and breaks such as Thanksgiving, winter break, spirit day, Spring break, legal holidays, or those officially observed by the agency are granted to the student. However, students may not count any of the hours taken for holidays; the field hours missed due to a holiday must be completed on alternative days. Students and the field instructor must negotiate a plan to make up field hours due to sick time, family illness, or snow days. The University Religious Observances Policy can be found at http://www.wmich.edu/provost/pdf/ReligiousObservances.pdf

If, at the end of the semester/session, a student is more than 16 hours short of the required number of hours, the following steps must be taken:

1. The faculty liaison should issue a grade of incomplete for the semester/session (which is replaced by the liaison at the completion of the hours).
2. The student must submit a written plan signed by the field instructor, the student, and the faculty liaison addressing how and by when field hours will be completed.

If a student is requesting to attend their field placements between semesters or beyond the final semester of field for educational reasons, the following steps must be taken:

1. The student must file a Field Extension Request with the Field Coordinator following the format in the appendix D.6 of the field manual to ensure coverage for the student under the university liability insurance policy.
2. The Field Coordinator forwards the request to the university business office and files a copy in the field office.

During extensions of a field placement, the Field Coordinator or the Assistant to the Field Coordinator will serve as the faculty liaison for the student and the agency unless other arrangements are made with the faculty liaison.

THE LEARNING CONTRACT/EVALUATION

The learning contract and student evaluation are contained in one document. (See appendix F). The learning contract is a plan for the field experience, which allows the student, the field instructor and the faculty liaison to focus on the knowledge, values, and practice behaviors necessary for the student to develop competency as a social worker.

The learning contract/evaluation is designed as a single working document to be added to as needed throughout the duration of the placement. The final page contains lines for the required signatures when the learning contract is written, as well as at the end of each semester when the evaluation components of the document are completed. All persons involved with the field placement need to sign the learning contract including the student, primary field instructor (and secondary if appropriate), and the faculty liaison.

All parties should keep a copy of this document each time it is signed. The student's signature on the evaluation line means only that s/he has read the document, but does not necessarily connote agreement. Cooperation of the field instructor in completing these forms by the deadline is extremely important as the student will receive a grade of incomplete if the form is late.

The level of field placement should be identified in the learning contract/evaluation as well as the concentration if applicable. Contact information for all parties should be included, i.e. student, faculty liaison, primary and secondary field instructor/s.

Each learning contract/evaluation contains the Ten Core Competencies identified by the CSWE as necessary for social workers to be able to demonstrate:

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
4. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice.
7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.
8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.
9. Respond to contexts that shape practice.
10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Under each competency, a minimum of practice behaviors are listed on the learning contract/evaluation. Each practice behavior listed should be demonstrated by the student via an activity or product specific to their placement. Additional practice behaviors and/or activities or products may be added if approved by the field liaison. Any behavior or agency expectation which will be evaluated by the field instructor that is not
already a part of the evaluation form, should be added such as: confidentiality, computer use, record keeping, policy and procedures, dress code, and any other substantive requirements or expectations of the agency.

The activities or products that demonstrate competencies should include areas of professional and interpersonal skill development, such as appropriate use of confrontation, supervision, self-awareness, and boundary development. Student attitude toward placement, clients and the student's level of comfort/discomfort should be areas to explore during placement. The student should identify any particular limitations or skills related to specialized interests as areas of potential growth.

The student should identify specific opportunities at the agency they will be involved in, e.g. work with groups, and community resources. These assignments may be those required by the faculty liaison, those related to the student's interests, and/or those requested by the field instructor. The safety check list and how the student will incorporate safety into their practice must be included in this section.

In writing the learning contract/evaluation, students should give consideration to the type of agency, the needs of the clients served, agency limitations and boundaries, and what the community needs from this agency. In addition, the student's learning style and the field instructor’s teaching approach will need to be taken into consideration. Students use this learning opportunity to stretch themselves professionally and create goals that will take them beyond their current knowledge base and push them into new areas of professional experience. Students should note the on-going use of the NASW Code of Ethics as the guide for the development of their value and skill base.

Special attention should be devoted to the student's understanding of oppression and discrimination and the development of advocacy skills to promote economic and social justice.

Additional Information
The writing of the contract will reflect standards appropriate to the college level. Spelling, clarity, and conciseness are important considerations.

EVALUATION AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The regular supervisory conference held with the student and the field instructor(s) is an essential vehicle for feedback, which is important to the learning experience. Roles and responsibilities related to the interaction between the student and the field instructor and should include:
- An established routine for weekly, regular conference/consultation time
- The use of weekly agendas (prepared by the student) during supervision
- Review of the learning contract/student evaluation during supervision
- Address conflicts and problems during supervision

As the placement progresses, the field instructors may wish to consider having the student complete a self-assessment by rating themselves in each competency on the contract/evaluation. The student and the field instructor can then compare the ratings, which will promote growth and identify areas for continued improvement. Field instructors should call the faculty liaison immediately if they have any questions about
the student's participation or other problems related to the placement. This helps address concerns early.

Student performance in the field for each semester will be rated by the field instructor using the following scale for each practice behavior:

1=Unacceptable Progress  2=Insufficient Progress  3=Emerging Competence  
4=Competent           5=Advanced Competence       N/A=Not applicable (please explain)

Each rating will be recorded in the appropriate column. Written comments by the field instructor are encouraged to add depth and clarity and to personalize the evaluation. The ratings and written comments will contribute to the student’s grade in the field education course.

The field instructor, student and faculty liaison are required to sign the evaluation. If the student has a primary and a secondary field instructor, both signatures are required on the evaluation instrument. The student's signature means only that s/he has read the report, but does not necessarily connote agreement. Cooperation of the field instructor in completing these forms by the deadline is extremely important as the student will receive a grade of incomplete if the form is late.

At the end of the semester field instructors and students will be asked to complete an evaluation of the field education experience. These will be sent out via email by the Office of Field Education with a due date and instructions. The feedback on these forms is very valuable to the Office of Field Education and the School of Social Work and is used for program improvement purposes. Feedback is also welcome and encouraged at any time throughout the academic year. Please contact the coordinator of field education at any time with issues or concerns.

**GRADING**

Grading is a symbolic expression of assessment of the student’s attainment of the core competencies. Grading is the sole responsibility of the faculty liaison. Criteria for grading include student progress as measured by the ratings and comments on the learning contract/evaluation, field instructor consultation with the faculty liaison, and as outlined in the course syllabus. BSW and MSW Foundation field placements will be graded. MSW Concentration field placements are credit/no credit.

* Students who have not submitted all signed copies of Learning Contract/Evaluation prior to the final week of the semester will receive an Incomplete (I) until this document is received.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The University has policies related to academic integrity, academic probation, dismissal, and the grievance and appeal procedures. Students are responsible for abiding by all policies and procedures related to the expectations of academic integrity. For a detailed description of the student grievance policies and procedures, refer to the University undergraduate or graduate catalog section on “Student Rights and Responsibilities” which can be accessed via the web page: [http://catalog.wmich.edu](http://catalog.wmich.edu) and the BSW & MSW student handbooks.
ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES

Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the WMU Disability Services for Students at 269-387-2116 at the beginning of the semester. A disability determination must be made by this office before any accommodations are provided. For more information, please visit http://www.wmich.edu/disabilityservices/index.html

PROBLEMS IN THE FIELD PLACEMENT

Some simple ways to avoid problems:

• Plan ahead.
• Make the learning contract reflect interests and needs.
• Review the learning contract/evaluation during weekly supervision.
• Request frequent and regular supervision from the field instructor.
• If students have special constraints, i.e. pregnancy, illness in the family, transportation problems, childcare responsibilities etc., which may create future problems, these issues should be discussed with the faculty liaison and field instructor early in the semester/session.
• Provide documentation regarding disabilities at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made.
• Discuss and agree to a schedule in writing at the beginning of the semester.
• Students should prepare an agenda for each supervisory conference and seek input from the field instructor.
• Students are encouraged to read all communication from the field instructor and the faculty liaison carefully.
• Students should be sure they understand directions, instructions, and requirements clearly including agency policies, guidelines, expectations, requirements, etc., and ask for assistance.

The student must take the initiative and responsibility for their own learning and utilize the problem-solving model below to work on resolving problems in the field placement:

Procedures for Students to Follow When Problems Arise:

Step 1. The student first talks to the primary field instructor about concerns and problems concerning the placement. A student may choose to obtain advice from the faculty liaison before talking to the field instructor. Corrective Action Plans to remediate the situation should be developed, written, signed, and dated by all parties. (See Appendix D.8 for a Sample Corrective Action Plan.

Step 2. If problems persist, the student should request a problem solving meeting with their faculty advisor, their faculty liaison, and the field instructor. (The faculty liaison can consult with the coordinator of field education about the problem if needed). Corrective Action Plans to remediate the situation should be developed, written, signed, and dated by all parties.
Step 3. If the field placement is going to be broken due to the student's performance, the student, faculty advisor, faculty liaison, coordinator of field education, and field instructor/s if possible, will participate in a Professional Review Committee (PRC) meeting. Following the PRC recommendations will be made to the Associate Director or his/her designee. Recommendations may include dismissal from the BSW or MSW program.

**UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE IN THE FIELD PLACEMENT**

The School of Social Work has the responsibility for evaluating and screening students for the social work profession. The School takes its role as “gatekeeper” to the profession very seriously and works with agency-based field instructors to evaluate student performance in the field placement. **Although a student's classroom performance may be satisfactory, it may become necessary to recommend that a student reconsider his/her preference for the social work profession if the performance in the field placement is not satisfactory.**

Students who are experiencing difficulties in their field placement must take responsibility for contacting their advisor and faculty liaison immediately to begin the problem-solving process. A written Corrective Action Plan must be developed with timelines established for addressing the issues noted and monitored by the field instructor, the faculty liaison, and the coordinator of field education if indicated. This plan should be signed and dated by all parties. Each party should keep a copy of the Corrective Action Plan.

If performance has been unsatisfactory, the student may be referred to a Professional Review Committee (PRC) (see the School of Social Work undergraduate or the graduate handbook or call the director of admissions for a description of the PRC and the process), which could result in dismissal from the social work program. The results of all PRC meetings follow the regular School of Social Work procedures and are kept in the student record. All reasonable and appropriate efforts will be expended to ensure that the field placement experiences are an appropriate measure of the student's abilities. Broken placements, failing field grades due to poor performance or professional incompetence, and violations of the NASW Code of Ethics could trigger a PRC meeting. These are explained below.

*Broken Placements: Interruption, Dismissal, or Request for Removal*

A student whose placement is broken may receive the grade of either incomplete or no credit for the semester/session in which they are enrolled depending on the outcome of either the Action Plan or the Professional Review Committee (PRC). If a placement is broken due to professional incompetence, the student will be referred to a PRC meeting for evaluation and review and could be dismissed from the social work program. The field instructor will be requested to put the concerns in writing and may be asked to attend the PRC meeting. If a student is re-placed into a new agency, the placement will be monitored closely by the faculty liaison to ensure that prior difficulties are not a continued issue. All students who need to be re-placed into a second field placement agency must complete an additional 50 clock hours of time in the new agency. The exception to this policy is when the student has completed fewer than 50 hours in the original agency; in that situation, the student will redo the number of hours that he/she
did in the original agency. This will be done to reduce the possibility that the student’s education will be compromised and to ensure that sufficient time for learning social work skills and practice will be available. It is believed that approximately 50 hours will be spent properly orienting the student to the new agency and completing a new learning contract. When the student develops the new learning contract, the student in consultation with the new field instructor and faculty liaison will include elements that address the issues that required a change of placement. If a student’s placement has a semester/session break or more, then at a minimum 100 hours will be added to their placement requirement.

At any point in the field placement, the field instructor can request immediate removal of the student from the field placement if the student’s behavior or performance seriously places at risk the quality of services delivered to clients and/or the reputation of the agency. The faculty liaison and coordinator of field education need to be contacted immediately whenever there is serious cause for concern. The field instructor will be requested to put the concerns in writing and to attend the PRC meeting.

**Failing Field Grade**
A failing grade for professional incompetence, inability to perform in field placement, and/or inability to accomplish the required competencies will trigger an immediate PRC meeting where the student could be terminated from the program. The field instructor will be requested to put the concerns in writing, and to attend the PRC meeting.

**THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION APPLIES TO ALL BSW, M.S.W FOUNDATION AND MSW CONCENTRATION STUDENTS**

*Performance Issues: Competence Variables*
During the course of the student’s educational program, the faculty liaison and agency field instructor will continuously evaluate the professional competence variables. Students should be able to:

• Relate to people with warmth and empathy and communicate feelings appropriately
• Recognize the essential worth and dignity of all human beings
• Appreciate the value of human diversity and to offer services to persons in need of assistance regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, physical condition, and/or value system
• Be willing to grapple with personal issues that include religion, sexual, and political preferences, etc., to ensure that their individual personal views are not imposed on clients.

*Professional Incompetence Issues*
Professional incompetence signifies that a student is not adequately or appropriately performing at his/her program level. The following list contains examples of behaviors that constitute professional incompetence:

• Lack of commitment to the values of the social work profession
• Exhibiting professional inappropriateness
• Inability to establish and maintain positive and constructive interpersonal relationships with clients and field instructors
• Inability to perform professional duties due to personal problems
• Refusal to accept and follow through on field placement assignments
• Inability to accept constructive feedback from the field instructor and/or faculty liaison
• Attendance problems or failure to communicate with field instructor about schedule difficulties
• Consistent lateness in meeting deadlines and in completing work
• Inability to apply professional skills and knowledge gained through classroom learning to the field experience
• Additional areas may be identified.

Violations of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics
BSW and MSW students in the School of Social Work are required to conduct themselves according to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. This Code of Ethics is used for making decisions about whether students have exhibited unethical behavior. Ethical behaviors as designated by the Code of Ethics are part of the requirements and standards for the program. All students have access to a copy of the NASW Code of Ethics upon entering the program (see appendix B or the NASW web site www.socialworkers.org for a copy). Discussion about the Code of Ethics occurs in social work field education labs, seminars and practice classes.

The following behaviors are examples, but not a complete list of behaviors, which constitute a violation of the NASW Code of Ethics or misconduct that could result in a meeting of the Professional Review Committee (PRC), which could result in dismissal from the program:

• Engaging in sexual activities with clients
• Participation in dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation
• Exploitation of clients for personal advantage
• Engaging in an inappropriate dual relationship
• Convicted of a felony offense while in the School of Social Work Program.

Violations deemed to be of a serious nature will result in prompt termination from the School of Social Work Program.

STUDENT SAFETY IN THE FIELD PLACEMENT

Safety of students in their field placement is a priority for the School of Social Work. While we do not want the student to be shielded from the realities of professional practice, immersing students in the realities of practice can also expose them to safety and security risks. Many students arrive at their field placement with concerns about personal safety that can significantly impact their learning opportunities and their experiences. The School of Social Work and all field placement agencies are encouraged to partner to reduce risks for students in field placement.

All students receive an introduction to safety in the field during their field education laboratories in the BSW program and in the foundation sequence of the MSW program. This preparation includes awareness of danger, assessment of the client, the environment, oneself, and intervention skills to de-escalate potentially violent situations. All students are also required to complete the safety check list by the established due
date. This document will encourage dialogue between the student and the field instructor and should be reviewed regularly.

The safety orientation provided by the faculty liaison is organized around the following objectives:

- To raise student consciousness about potential violence and place such violence in a contextual frame so that students maintain empathy with clients
- To place emphasis on preventing violence by providing students with knowledge of precautionary measures, including alertness to possible danger signals about the immediate environment and behavior of clients
- To encourage students to assume responsibility for their own safety and to trust their own feelings and intuition
- To help students develop a framework and various options for responding to potential danger
- To provide activities for students to demonstrate how safety information is relevant in practice situations
- To provide content that is consistent with social work values and principles and congruent with the curriculum.

The following information should help the student and the field instructor frame discussions regarding safety in the field placement:

Situations That Require Assessment and Planning
For each situation a student will be assigned, an assessment of the following should be included:

- What does your involvement with the client mean to them?
- How does the client perceive you?
- How does the client perceive the alternatives?
- How does the client perceive the consequences?
- How does the client perceive their role and their responsibilities?

Considerations and Guidelines When Working with Individuals with Mental Illness
(Griffin, W., et al., 1995)

Fear of mentally ill, to a great extent, is unfounded. Mentally ill individuals usually exhibit fear and confusion rather than assaultive behavior or aggression. The following may be helpful when working with individuals with mental illness:

- State clearly who you are and the purpose of your contact
- Be empathetic, non-threatening, and sincere in your intention to help
- Give honest, factual answers whenever necessary
- If you do not know, say so
- Do not belittle any concerns which the client raises
- Particularly on the first contact, do not give advice
- Be supportive in all comments and gestures and remember that nonverbal communication is extremely important
- Assumptions are dangerous; don’t assume that individuals with mental illness should “know better” and are in need of a good lecture
- Keep all your promises, especially about appointments and following up; your credibility is on the line
• Know how to activate emergency backup and use it if the client appears to be a danger to themselves or others.

*Pre-Incident Indicators That Pose a Safety Risk* (DeBecker, G., 1997)
- Is the person emotionally healthy?
- Is the person competent?
- Is the person substance free?
- Is the person trustworthy?
- Will the client or member of the family unit be removed from the family situation on this visit?
- Is the geographical location potentially dangerous (rural, isolated, neighborhood concerns, drug involvement)?
- Will the visit occur after normal working hours?
- Does the client have a life-threatening or serious injury?
- Are there animals present?
- Are weapons involved?

Be aware if the client exhibits the following: (Griffin, W., et al., 1995)
- Increased physical activity
- A sudden cessation of activity or forced eye contact
- Acting in a bizarre manner (active state of mental illness?)
- Non-communicative, sullen, holding back
- Client physically moves back or tells you to move back
- Carrying a visible weapon
- Clenched fists, glaring eyes, coiled posture
- Dress that is inappropriate for the weather
- Nonverbal communication does not match verbal communication.

*Community Based Social Work: Personal Safety, Car and Street Safety, and the Home Visit* (Street Smarts, 1992)
- Anticipate the unexpected and always have a PLAN: Be a tough target, deny privacy, attract attention, and take action.
- Pace yourself and don’t schedule too many visits in one day
- Be cautious of entering environments with large groups of people
- Note all exits and stay near the door if possible
- Allow people to “blow off steam,” use verbal ploys, and create cooling off time
- Be vigilant for signs of escalation such as clenched fists, dilated pupils, etc.
- If the person has been using any substances, end the meeting and return another time.

*Tips for Safety* (Griffin, W., et al., 1995)
- Familiarize yourself with the area prior to leaving the office. Know where you are going, plan your route and become familiar with unknown geographic areas.
- Check out your car prior to entering it. Park in well-lit areas, lock your car, and leave all valuables in the trunk prior to leaving the office.
- Wear sensible clothing and limit use of jewelry. Carry your purse across your body and drive with your belongings on the floor of your car.
• Look alert, assertive, self-confident, and in control.
• Rely on your instincts.
• Do whatever will increase your chances of a safe escape.
• Refuse to go to a secondary crime scene.

Closing the Loop: Agency Issues
Agencies are encouraged to have policies and procedures regarding employee and student safety. These policies should be reviewed, prioritized, and reinforced on a regular basis. Agency field instructors are encouraged to:
• Debrief the student after any incident
• Help the student understand how a client’s cultural background and ethnicity could be vital to personal safety
• Help the student understand individual and group differences when it comes to accurately interpreting behavior.

Supervision, the Learning Contract, and the Safety Check List
• All student learning contracts should contain a section regarding student/employee safety in the agency and community
• In an effort to “close the loop” between the School of Social Work and community agencies who host student field placements, all students are required to complete the Safety Check List with their field instructor and turn it in to the Office of Field Education by the due date (see appendix D.3)
• Cases that are “at risk” should receive more intense supervision/consultation/monitoring
• Students need to be exposed to triaging client situations, peer review (where possible), and the importance of seeking consultation in potentially unsafe situations.

Social workers nationwide are experiencing increased danger and students must recognize the potential for risk to personal safety. When in the field placement, students must be alert to environmental factors relative to personal safety.

Students are required to comply with the following:
• Agency standards regarding personal safety
• Agency standards regarding building, office safety, and security
• Agency infectious disease control procedures or OSHA requirements
• Agency standards for working with high-risk clients
• Agency policies related to the use of a personally owned vehicle specifying that the vehicle is insured and in good working order when making community-based visits and/or transporting clients on agency business
• Agency safety protocols, including building and office security, emergency procedures, management of violent clients, and home visit safety procedures.

Field instructors are encouraged to include the following during agency orientation:
• Information about the prevalence of, or potential for, violence while in field placement
• Orientation to the surrounding community and neighborhoods, or areas where the student may work, and discuss concerns that students may have regarding their work in a community-based setting
• Include opportunities for students to observe and shadow their field instructor on community-based visits
• Allow field instructors opportunities to observe and mentor students on community-based visits
• Provide resources (such as safety training, pagers, cellular telephones, etc.) to students for community-based visits if available to staff
• Carefully consider all assignments given to students and assess the assignments’ potential for risk, as well as the student’s ability to perform the assignment, prior to the student accepting the assignment.

Automobile Use
• Students should be aware that Michigan is a no-fault insurance state. Students should check with their insurance agent to find out what impact Michigan’s no-fault auto insurance law has on your current insurance policy. The School of Social Work and/or the University cannot be responsible for you automobile insurance coverage.
• If students will be utilizing their personally owned vehicle for field placement business, they should check with their insurance carrier to insure that they are covered prior to using their automobile for field placement business.

Health Care Preparation
There are established Federal guidelines regarding occupational health and safety in health care (OSHA). These guidelines are established to protect the working public and to help increase knowledge so that they can take the proper precautions, which will enhance their well-being. Certain vaccinations and/or tests are recommended for anyone who plans to interact with clients in a hospital or community-based setting. Given the nature of our health care system, a majority of the clients many of our students may be working with may not have access to or utilize the health care options available to them. Therefore, students should consult with your health care provider regarding immunizations and any medical condition prior to entering field.

Please ask your specific agency if they require immunizations. If they do, inquire if you can obtain the vaccination at the agency where you are placed and whether the agency will cover the cost.

Please review this information carefully and take the appropriate steps to ensure your safety and well-being while in field placement.

The following situations warrant special attention by the field instructor and the student:
• The physical restraint of clients
• Transportation of clients in the student’s personally owned vehicle
• Transportation of clients who have a history of violent behavior
• Interaction with clients who have a history of violent behavior
• Work in a setting when agency staff is not present.

Any incident resulting in injury to a student must be reported to the faculty liaison and/or coordinator of field education immediately.

References And Additional Resources For Safety Preparation


MacFadden, R.J. (1980). *Stress, support and the frontline social worker.* Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto.


