

# Department of Social Work Field Education Handbook 2022-2023



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Accredited by the Council on Social Work Education

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## Introduction

This handbook is designed for field students, field instructors, and the University of Detroit Mercy Social Work faculty. In addition, it may be helpful to prospective social work majors who want to learn more about the program and field instruction.

## About the Department of Social Work

University of Detroit and Mercy College of Detroit legally merged in 1991. Both institutions had a longstanding commitment to meet the needs of the poor and to address social injustice in the midst of providing a high-quality educational experience. The University of Detroit's Social Work program was first accredited by the Council on Social Work Education in 1976. Mercy College of Detroit was accredited in 1980. The combined program has continued the tradition of its accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education.

## Program Goals

The Department of Social Work seeks to:

- Prepare BSW students for ethical, competent entry-level, generalist professional social work practice, particularly in urban settings with diverse, poor, vulnerable, and oppressed individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Foster a commitment to continuing education, maintain competence in practice, and enhance and increase opportunities for BSW graduates for renewal and advancement within the profession.

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## Non-Discrimination Policy

The University of Detroit Mercy prohibits discrimination in educational and employment opportunities, services, and benefits on the basis of race, color, religion, age, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, income, protected veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.

## Overview of Field Education

Field Instruction I and II (SWK 4700/4750) and Social Work Seminar I and II (SWK 4710/4760) are the capstone courses of the social work curriculum.

The field practicum is organized into two academic courses: SWK 4700 (Field Instruction I), taken in the fall semester of the student's senior year, and SWK 4750 (Field Instruction II), taken in the winter semester. Each field instruction course accounts for 5 credit hours. Students are in field for approximately 16 hours per week to reach a total of 400 required hours, 200 hours per semester. The field seminar is organized into two academic courses: SWK 4710 (Social Work Seminar I) and SWK 4760 (Social Work Seminar II), for 2 credit hours each.

Field Instruction and Social Work Seminar are co-requisite courses, meaning that they must be completed during the same semester. Additionally, Field Instruction and Social Work Seminar must be completed in consecutive fall/winter semesters.

### Nature of Field Instruction

Field Instruction is the product of a joint undertaking of the University, the agency, and the student. The University takes the initiative to prepare students for the field agency, selects and recommends the students to the agencies, works with the field instructor and the student regarding the learning goals, evaluation methods, and student/agency concerns. The field instructor at the same time provides their observational and experiential skills professionally to develop and meet the goals and objectives of the field instruction.

The BSW Program curriculum and all related program activities are designed to support the program's mission and the BSW program goals and objectives. The central BSW degree program goal is to prepare students for entry-level generalist social work practice. The program prepares competent generalist level social work practitioners skill sets, integrated with areas of social concern. The objectives for field education in the senior year are for students to:

1. Learn a variety of intervention methods and techniques for use with individuals, families, small groups, and service delivery and change in organizations, neighborhoods, and communities; and

2. Articulate a framework or frameworks for the differential use of these intervention methods and techniques with at least two social-system levels (individual, family, small groups, organization, neighborhood, and community).

The program includes the core knowledge, values and skills, and the professional foundation for social work practice. Field education is an integral part of the BSW degree program and is anchored in the mission, goals, and educational level of the program. Students' experiences in field and the achievements experienced there support the goals of the BSW program, as stated below, reflecting how the mission is achieved through both course work and field experiences:

1. To prepare BSW students for ethical, competent entry-level, generalist professional social work practice, particularly in urban settings with diverse, poor, vulnerable, and oppressed individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
2. To foster a commitment to continuing education, maintain competence in practice, and enhance and increase opportunities for BSW graduates for renewal and advancement within the profession.

Field education is designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated on the basis of criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program competencies. In the senior year field placement, students connect the theoretical and conceptual contributions of the integrated knowledge from all courses classroom with the practice setting, fostering the implementation of evidence-informed practice. Students clearly articulate this skill when learning to use various approaches in working with client systems as they hone their critical thinking skills. Senior-year objectives are centered on an analysis of presenting problems or situations, planning, problem-solving, differential use of intervention strategies and techniques, and competency in social work practice. Attention is also given to the student's overall knowledge of the placement agency and the scope of social work practice; student's knowledge of social work and use of skills, including communication and listening; student's ability to perform within agency standards, as well as the students' appropriate use of assistance from the field instructor. To achieve these objectives, the senior year meta-focus in class and field is on socializing students to the profession. To increase student self-awareness, ability, and agility in working with and on behalf of clients, they are introduced to social work knowledge, values, and conceptual frameworks, and given assignments consistent with the goals and objectives for fieldwork.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Field Instruction

The following explanation is meant to clarify the meaning of terms used by the Department of Social Work, referring to the roles of faculty liaison and field instructor, and field placement

coordinator. The following role descriptions are offered for clarification: The Faculty Field Liaison and the Field Instructor are two roles related to a student's field placement (or internship, as the field placement is called in some agencies/schools). These roles are distinguished from an academic advisor as noted.

### Faculty Field Liaison

The Faculty Field Liaison is a full-time or part-time faculty member in the Department who serves as the liaison between the student, the Field Instructor, and the agency. The Faculty Field Liaison meets with the Field Instructor and student a **minimum of once per semester** to specify and clarify, student assignments in the field placement, read the student records, address field education performance issues and, as necessary, develop a corrective action plan, review a student evaluation with the student and the field instructor, and is available to discuss any issues about the field placement with the student.

The Faculty Field Liaison is responsible for obtaining the field placement evaluation and submitting the evaluation to the Field Education Coordinator. The Faculty Field Liaison must complete a supporting memorandum along with the field placement evaluation form whenever an unsatisfactory grade is recommended (C- or below, Incomplete). The student must receive a copy of the memorandum along with a copy placed in the student's academic file.

The Faculty Field Liaison shall:

- Meet at least once each semester with the individual Field Instructor and student.
- Act as liaison between the agency and the college.
- Submit all evaluative materials to the Field Education Coordinator and Chair at the end of the semester.
- Counsel students regarding problems or concerns related to field instruction.
- Advise other faculty of concerns in-field instruction.

### Field Instructor

The Field Instructor is the agency employee who guides assignments in the field placement, provides instruction at the field placement, and evaluates the student's performance with the student and the faculty advisor. In addition to the Field Instructor, some students are assigned a task supervisor, an agency employee who works directly in the program area where a student is placed and assists the student with tasks related to their assignments in field education. They also report to the Field Instructor on the student's progress in tasks. The Field Instructor and the task supervisor are not paid by the University for their work in this capacity but are performing valuable professional volunteer service.

The Field Instructor shall:

- Inform the Field Education Coordinator if the student is acceptable for the field instruction site.
- Provide on-site supervision to the student(s) weekly.
- Hold a baccalaureate or master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and have at least two-years of post-social work degree practice experience in social work.
- Make relevant assignments to the student(s).
- Meet at least once a semester with the Faculty Field Liaison.
- Apprise the Faculty Field Liaison of any problems or concerns regarding the placement before mid-semester.
- Complete the evaluation forms as requested.
- Attend Field Instructor's meetings initiated by the Field Education Coordinator.

#### Field Education Coordinator

The Field Education Coordinator has overall responsibility for student field placements. The field coordinator takes responsibility for arranging field placements, arranging contractual agreements, and confirming malpractice insurance with the University and outside agencies. If a student requires re-placement in another setting, then it is the responsibility of the Field Education Coordinator to make that arrangement. If the Field Education Coordinator submits a change different from the field liaison's recommendation, then the change must be documented along with an accompanying memorandum.

The Field Education Coordinator shall:

- Meet with each student applying for field instruction and explore the various potential sites which have been previously visited to discuss roles and expectations with the agency and personnel who will be affected by the student's placement.
- Initiate meetings of Field Instructors to provide orientation to the social work program and college, address common concerns, and solicit their input on the content of the social work curriculum.
- Facilitate the social work field seminar courses.

#### Student

The student plays a vital role in field education. Student learning is at the heart of the field education program, as such, students must take personal responsibility for their learning.

The student shall:



- Follow up on potential sites for field instruction provided by the Field Education Coordinator by initiating a meeting with the designated contact person and informing the Field Education Coordinator of his/her perceptions of the meetings.
- Practice and observe field instruction site procedures for promptness, attendance, work completion, and appropriate dress.
- Complete assignments of Field Instructor.
- Meet with the Field Instructor weekly for supervision.
- Participate in agency-sponsored in-service training, where possible, and other related professional meetings.
- Meet any health or general requirements of the field instruction site, such as physical examination, drug screens, TB tests, or criminal background checks.
- Complete all academic assignments for field instruction.

### Selection of Field Instruction Sites

The Department of Social Work is acutely aware of the importance of the field instruction agency as an opportunity for the student to integrate their theoretical learning into a practice model. To be effective, a field instruction agency must meet the following guidelines:

- The agency philosophy of social service shall be compatible with the educational objectives of the social work profession.
- The agency's mission shall be compatible with that of the Department of Social Work.
- The agency may not have exclusionary policies or practices that discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, income, protected veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.
- The agency should provide ethical and professional social work services with an emphasis on evidence-based practice. Agencies and agency field instructors are expected to follow the *NASW Code of Ethics* and requirements of the Michigan Board of Social Work.
- The agency must provide a field instructor who holds a baccalaureate or master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and have at least two-years of post-social work degree practice experience in social work.
- Students must be allowed to carry out practice assignments that are within the specific mission and goals of the agency, fulfill the educational program of the program, and are geared to the educational needs and interests of the students.
- The agency shall provide the student with a physical place to work within the agency setting and with necessary supplies for their work (desk, supplies, telephone, computer, support services).
- The agency will provide an orientation for students covering rules, regulations, procedures, facilities, and equipment of the agency.

- A representative from the agency must sign an affiliation agreement that outlines agency and school responsibilities.

## Field Placement Process

Students are expected to follow the field placement process detailed below to secure a field placement. Students do not develop their own placements. All field placements must be approved by the Field Education Coordinator to ensure they meet the requirements of the program. The University of Detroit Mercy, Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that all students will secure a placement. If students are not able to successfully secure a placement by the 5th week of the semester, they may be required to withdraw from the social work program or postpone field placement.

The placement matching process follows these steps:

- Student completes the electronic field placement application during the winter semester prior to their senior year. The link to the field placement application will be provided to students via email.
- The Field Education Coordinator reviews the completed application and begins to coordinate the placement assignment process. The Field Education Coordinator may also review the student's admissions file, consult with other faculty, and meet with the student as necessary to identify strengths and needs for field education.
- Student receives an email from the Field Coordinator regarding the possible agency field placement. The email provides instructions to the student regarding their expected follow-up.
- Student schedules an interview at the expected agency site.
- Field Instructor and Field Education Coordinator confer to determine whether the student has been accepted to the agency. If accepted, the student is "placed".
- If the Field Instructor and/or the student decide the placement is not a good fit, the Field Education Coordinator will work with the student to identify another placement option.

## Unsuccessful Placement Interviews

If a student has one or more unsuccessful placement interviews and the Field Education Coordinator receives feedback relevant to the student's presentation of self, assessed readiness for field, or appropriateness of placement choice or concentration in relation to required previous experience, the student will be invited to meet with Field Education Coordinator to discuss. Following this discussion, a student may be asked to develop a plan if it is determined that additional supports are required in field placement that must be addressed before continued efforts are made to identify a field placement. This may include a recommendation to select a different concentration. Please navigate to the BSW Handbook policy on student performance.

## Field Education Policies and Procedures

### Placement

The Field Education Coordinator has primary responsibility for selecting agencies that can provide appropriate field education experiences for students. Students do not develop their own placement opportunities, but rather work directly with the Field Education Coordinator in identifying appropriate placements.

### Challenges Securing Field Placement

Occasionally students may interview at multiple agencies and not be offered a field placement. The Department of Social Work cannot and does not guarantee that students will successfully secure a field placement. If a student is not offered placement after three interviews, it is the student's responsibility to schedule a field advising appointment to discuss barriers to placement with the Field Education Coordinator. If no match is found after three interviews, a review of the student's appropriateness for placement will be conducted by the department faculty. Students that are repeatedly experiencing unsuccessful interviews may not be allowed to continue with the placement process. They may be offered the opportunity to delay placement until the following academic year. Students shall not continue in their seminar coursework, as field instruction and seminar must be taken concurrently.

### Dual Relationships

Students are not permitted to be placed at agencies where family members are employed or are receiving services. The Department of Social Work discourages and, in most situations, will not approve placement of students in agencies where they have been employed, or where they have previously received services as a client. These recommendations exist to protect students, agency employees, and clients from conflicts that may arise due to dual relationships. If a student wishes to complete their field placement at their place of employment, refer to the Guidelines for Students Considering Field Practicum at Student's Place of Employment.

### Guidelines for Students Considering Field Practicum at Student's Place of Employment

Placement at an agency where the student is employed may be proposed by the student. Evaluation and approval of the proposal, to use the agency where the student is employed for a field practicum placement, is the responsibility of the Department of Social Work. The agency official with the authority to grant permission for release time for the field placement should be contacted before submitting proposals to the Field Education Coordinator for approval. The final proposal must be approved by both the student's proposed agency Field Instructor and the Field Education Coordinator.

## Criteria for Approval of Field Placement at Student's Place of Employment

Practicum experience may not include or in any way duplicate the roles, tasks, or responsibilities for which the student is employed by the agency. Any roles, tasks, or responsibilities performed by the student for practicum purposes must be separate and additional to any roles, tasks, or responsibilities for which the student is employed by the agency, including clientele and caseload. Practicum hours must be completed outside the scope of employment hours. Any roles, tasks, or responsibilities performed by the student for practicum purposes must be under the direction of a separate supervisor from that who oversees the roles, tasks, or responsibilities for which the student is employed by the agency. University liability insurance and professional insurance will cover the student only during field placement hours.

The following considerations are made when evaluating a student's request for field placement at their place of employment:

- The student shall have worked as a member of the service delivery staff in the agency for at least one full year before entering into a field instruction experience.
- An employee agency selected for field instruction must be a recognized social work agency. In all respects, agencies used must meet the regular criteria for field instruction.
- The student must have a field instructor for the educational experience who is different from the regular work superior. The field instructor must meet the regular criteria used in other field instruction settings.
- At least one full day (8 hours) of the two days of field instruction each week shall be designated exclusively for field instruction. Two additional half-day schedules (4 hours) may complement the educational focus for a total of 16 hours a week.
- The agency designated field instructor must schedule an hour every week for a direct one-to-one supervisory conference.
- The responsibilities and commitments of the student, the Department of Social Work, and the employing agency in which the student proposes to engage in field instruction will be clearly defined. In every other respect, field instruction must conform to the Department's standards, policies, and procedures as specified in the current manual.
- The agency must recognize the role transition that is expected of its employees who attend the Social Work Program under these arrangements. When engaged in practicum assignments, this includes a change from a worker-supervisor relation to a learner-teacher relationship. It also implies a sincere effort to avoid creating work responsibilities that might jeopardize the student's opportunity to use the learning experiences that have been selected for practicum purposes.

Students should be aware that consequences may arise from a change in employment status or management at their agency. If a student's employment is terminated by an agency, it could jeopardize the ability to complete field requirements. In the case of termination, the

Department of Social Work shall investigate the reason for termination before the student could be reassigned to a new field placement. Reassignment and continuation of field placement is not guaranteed. The approval and acceptance of the agency field instructor rest with the Department of Social Work. The agency must agree to comply with all practicum policies delineated in the University of Detroit Mercy Department of Social Work field manual and affiliation agreement.

### Academic Credit for Life/Work Experience

Academic or field practicum credit is not granted for life experience or professional work experience.

### Attendance

Students are expected to be at the agency on a consistent, regular basis throughout both semesters in order to complete the total field hours required. Students cannot work extra hours each week in order to finish field practicum early; continuity over time is a desirable developmental factor in the field experience.

### Timekeeping

Students are expected to track all time spent at their agency. Students must utilize the timekeeping forms approved by the Department of Social Work. The student's Field Instructor must sign and approve all timekeeping forms.

### Unexpected Absences

If students are unable to be at their field agency as scheduled for any reason, the student must discuss this with their agency Field Instructor. Hours missed must be made up to ensure students complete the total number of hours required each semester. Extensions may be considered in extenuating circumstances but must be approved by Faculty Field Liaison and by the Field Education Coordinator.

### Student Safety

There are inherent risks in social work practice. Therefore, agencies, agency field instructors, and students are expected to collaborate to enhance safety and minimize risks in field. Agencies are expected to have written policies to address work situations that may entail risk for students. Such situations may include the following: home visits, services to clients outside the agency, services provided at night or on weekends, services to clients who may become angry or violent, exposure to pathogens or toxic substances, and services that are politically sensitive which may result in threats of violence. Agency Field Instructors are expected to orient students

to their agency's policies and practices regarding risk management and to assign students tasks that are consistent with the student's level of competence. Students are expected to adhere to agency policies and to promptly address any concerns about their safety with their agency Field Instructor.

All students are required to provide a copy of a Michigan State Police criminal background check at the time that they submit an application for the field placement. Agencies may have additional requirements with which students are expected to comply. Agencies may review databases such as the child abuse registry and sex offender registry. Agencies may require that students undergo additional background checks, immunizations, and drug testing. The costs associated with immunizations and background checks are the responsibility of the student. If a student does not obtain clearances for any of these, they may become ineligible for that agency and possibly for another field agency placement.

## Harassment

The University of Detroit Mercy is committed to maintaining a working and learning environment that is free of unlawful discrimination and harassment and in which every student is treated with dignity and respect. The University strives to create an environment that supports, encourages, and rewards educational advancement on the basis of ability and performance. Accordingly, the University prohibits to the extent permitted by applicable law, discrimination and harassment against an individual on the basis of that person's race, color, religion, age, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, income, protected veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.

Students who experience harassment at their field agency should alert the Faculty Field Liaison immediately. If you experience harassment in your field agency, the Department of Social Work faculty is committed to investigating the situation and connecting you with needed support.

## Sexual Harassment

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities. Title IX applies to public and private educational institutions that receive federal funds – including the University of Detroit Mercy.

Generally, sexual harassment and sexual assault are considered discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment includes a range of behaviors from catcalling, staring at body parts, and inappropriate jokes to sexual assault and rape. The sex of the harasser and the person being harassed is irrelevant.

Unwelcome means that the person being harassed did not request or invite the behavior and regarded the conduct as undesirable or offensive. A failure to complain or flat out say "no"

does not mean that the conduct was welcome. In some situations, a person may not be able to complain about unwelcome behaviors because of a power imbalance.

Title IX requires the University of Detroit Mercy to respond to certain harassment on the basis of sex which it knows about or reasonably should have known about. Specifically, the University must:

- Investigate what happened.
- Take appropriate steps to resolve the matter – the University must do its best to eliminate the harassment, prevent recurrence, and remedy effects even if no formal complaint has been made or when a person making a complaint does not wish to further participate in the process.
- Take interim measures during the investigation to prevent potential further harassment.

If you feel you have been discriminated against on the basis of sex in your field placement, the University of Detroit Mercy has a responsibility to investigate your concern and provide you with support. Students should report discrimination on the basis of sex to their Faculty Field Liaison. Additionally, students may report the incident(s) to the Title IX Coordinator and Equity and Compliance Specialist at (313) 993-1802.

### [Student Professional Liability Insurance](#)

Students are expected to have malpractice/professional liability insurance at the time they begin their field internship. The university provides liability insurance under a large umbrella policy for all students in the field internship.

### [Student Professional Conduct and Standards](#)

Social Work education is preparation for professional practice and as such there are expectations that go beyond academic standards within a classroom. There are physical, cognitive, emotional, and character requirements for effective social work practice, in addition to compliance with social work state licensing laws and ethics. Students who violate or fail to demonstrate adherence to these essential skills, values, and standards as they progress through the social work program and their field practicum may be subject to dismissal from the social work program and may be unable to secure a social work license and/or job upon graduation.

Students are evaluated on these professional standards in all areas of the BSW and MSW program including admissions, academic classes, and field practicum. Students are expected to possess these attributes and skills at a level appropriate to their year in the program.

## Professionalism

Students are expected to follow agency rules and policies. They are expected to be punctual and dependable. They are expected to demonstrate professional behavior in their interactions with clients, agency staff, and the University of Detroit Mercy faculty and staff. Students should provide services to clients that are based on relevant social work knowledge and research. Students must demonstrate an ability to prioritize responsibilities and complete assignments.

## Interpersonal Skills

Social work students demonstrate the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively to other students, faculty, staff, clients, and other professionals. These include showing respect for and consideration of others, listening skills, and the ability to communicate effectively both verbally and non-verbally. Students take appropriate responsibility for their actions and consider the impact on others. They work effectively with others, regardless of the level of authority. Students advocate in an appropriate, respectful and responsible manner taking into consideration the complexity of each situation. They use proper channels for complaints, conflict resolution, and grievances. Students demonstrate a willingness to receive feedback from faculty and field instructors, administrators, staff, and colleagues in a positive and respectful manner.

## Values

Students must demonstrate a commitment to the core values of social work including service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.

## Diversity

Social work students must value diversity. Students must serve in an appropriate manner all persons seeking assistance in their agency regardless of race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, income, protected veteran status, genetic information, limited English proficiency, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local law.

Students must not impose their own personal, religious, and/or cultural values on others and must know how their own background and value base affect his or her interactions with clients. Students must be willing to reflect on and change their behavior when it interferes with their ability to work with a client.



## Self-Awareness

Social work students know how their own values, beliefs, attitudes, and past experiences affect their thinking, behaviors, relationships, and overall practice. Students examine their internal processes, their strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice. Social work students demonstrate an awareness of how others perceive them and are willing to change behaviors that are non-conducive to working relationships with clients or other professionals.

## Empathy

Social workers endeavor to gain insight and understanding into the values, lived experiences, and beliefs that clients have. Social work students communicate empathy and support clients as a basis for building a productive and professional relationship with the client.

## Self-Care

Social work students recognize the signs of stress and emotional problems, develop appropriate means of self-care, and seek support services when necessary to minimize any adverse impact on scholastic and professional performance. Students must be willing to seek the advice of their faculty advisor and follow recommendations made by their advisor and/or faculty decisions regarding the appropriate maintenance of their academic, physical, or psychological health, which may include assessment and/or therapeutic services.

## Ethical Behavior

Students must abide by the ethical standards of the profession developed by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics*. The *Code of Ethics* can be found at: <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics->

## Privacy and Confidentiality

Social work students should respect and protect the privacy and confidentiality of clients. Students should not solicit private information from clients unless it is needed to provide services. Students are expected to comply with confidentiality requirements outlined in agency policy, applicable laws, and the NASW *Code of Ethics* and only disclose client information in accordance with such policies and/or if disclosing information is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person. Students should not disclose identifying information about clients in seminar and other classes.

## Sexual Relationships and Physical Contact

Students should not engage in physical contact (such as hugging or massaging clients) with clients when there is a possibility of psychological harm to the client as a result. Students

should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with current or former clients – or with other individuals with whom clients maintain close personal relationships where there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. Social work students, not their clients, assume the full burden of setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

### Social Media Guidelines

Social media channels, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, and various blog sites are just a few examples of new and exciting ways to connect with others and share information. Likewise, technology has broadened social workers' capacity to assess and manage information about clients, influence policy, address social justice issues, and receive supervision. However, the rapid growth of social media communication tools and their ease of accessibility can also have unintended and potentially damaging consequences to users if basic guidelines are ignored. Students are expected to adhere to social work values, ethics and engage in professional conduct as outlined in the NASW *Code of Ethics* when using social media communication tools, whether using a personal site(s), agency site(s), or University site(s).

### Addressing Difficulties and Challenges in Field

The Department of Social Work is committed to assisting students to maximize their learning opportunities and experiences in a field placement. Issues, concerns, and demonstrated difficulties need to be identified and addressed in a professional manner in order to provide resolution and/or corrective actions as necessary. Participation in this process is part of the field practicum learning objectives. Every effort is made to assure that the student's rights to due process are protected, as well as assuring the appropriate protections to agency and client interests. When a concern is identified the following sequence of activities should occur:

#### Concerns of a Student about the Agency Field Instructor or Agency

1. The student will address the concerns with the Agency Field Instructor and see if the issues of concern can be worked out directly. Since the power differential between student and Agency Field Instructor can be somewhat intimidating, especially early in the practicum relationship, the student may wish to consult with their Faculty Field Liaison to "rehearse" how to approach the Agency Field Instructor for such a discussion.
2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the Agency Field Instructor, the student will contact their Faculty Field Liaison and consult regarding the potential arrangement of a face-to-face meeting among all concerned. The Faculty Field Liaison may use teleconference or video technology as a more responsive way to meet with agencies that may otherwise require significant travel time. Such a meeting will serve to clarify problems, discuss potential solutions, and attempt to develop a plan that will allow the practicum to go forth.

3. Should this final approach be unsuccessful, the student, Agency Field Instructor, and/or Faculty Field Liaison shall inform the Field Education Coordinator and all parties shall meet to discuss options available to the student. If indicated, this meeting may be to arrange termination of the student placement with the agency. Termination of a field placement cannot occur unless the problem-solving process has been fully utilized.
4. If appropriate, the Field Education Coordinator will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student to identify other placement options. The Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that a second field option will be available.

#### Concerns of the Agency Field Instructor About the Student

1. The Agency Field Instructor will address the concerns with the student and see if the issues of concern can be worked out directly. Experience with such situations indicates that open and clear communication between the student and Agency Field Instructor often alleviates tense or problematic situations.
2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the student, the Agency Field Instructor will contact the Faculty Field Liaison for the placement and consult /her about the situation. Often, this sort of strategizing can result in a resolution to the problem.
3. The Faculty Field Liaison is always available to come to the site to meet face-to-face with the student, Agency Field Instructor, and anyone else deemed appropriate. At this point, an action plan for resolving the issue will be developed and agreed to by all parties.
4. Should this final approach be unsuccessful, the student, Agency Field Instructor, and Faculty Field Liaison shall inform the Field Education Coordinator and meet to discuss options available to the student, and if indicated, arrange termination of the student placement with the agency. Termination of a field placement cannot occur unless the problem-solving process has been fully utilized.
5. If appropriate, the Field Education Coordinator will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student to identify other placement options. The Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that a second field option will be available.
6. If indicated, a student may be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students to address any concerns.

#### Immediate Suspension/Termination of Field Placement

In the event that an agency wishes to immediately suspend or terminate a practicum placement due to unprofessional behavior of a student, safety concerns for clients, or unethical behavior of students the Agency Field Instructor is requested to:

1. Contact the Faculty Field Liaison immediately to discuss the circumstances leading to the situation.
2. The Agency Field Instructor and/or Faculty Field Liaison will then contact the Field Education Coordinator to inform of the decision to terminate a student.
3. Inform the student verbally (with written follow-up) of the reason for the suspension or termination.

4. Work with the Faculty Field Liaison to accomplish any follow-up activities or meetings that need to occur in order to appropriately end the placement.
5. Discuss with the Faculty Field Liaison and Field Education Coordinator ways in which the situation leading to the termination can be avoided in the future, and how the agency and university can work together to promote social work education.
6. If appropriate, the Field Education Coordinator will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student to identify other placement options. The Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that a second field option will be available.
7. Termination from a field placement may result in a grade of F in field, which would disallow the student to continue in the program.

#### Concerns of the Faculty Field Liaison About the Student

1. The Faculty Field Liaison will address any concerns with the student and see if the issues or concerns can be directly worked out.
2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the student, the Faculty Field Liaison will notify the agency and the Field Education Coordinator of their concerns and a meeting will be arranged to address the Faculty Field Liaison's concerns.
3. If appropriate, the Field Education Coordinator will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student to identify other placement options. The Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that a second field option will be available.
4. If indicated, a student may be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students to address any concerns.

#### Concerns of the Faculty Field Liaison About the Agency

1. The Faculty Field Liaison will address any concerns with the agency and see if the issues or concerns can be directly worked out.
2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the agency, the Faculty Field Liaison will notify the agency and the Field Education Coordinator of their concerns and a meeting will be arranged to address the Faculty Field Liaison's concerns.
3. If appropriate, the Field Education Coordinator will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student (or external site program coordinator) to identify other placement options.

#### Termination of Students from Field Placement

Students in field practicum are expected to demonstrate professional behavior, attitude, and demeanor in their practicum agency and their community. Occasionally, serious situations occur in which students fail significantly to adhere to key professional expectations. Failure to adhere to these professional expectations can result in the termination of field practicum and/or removal from the BSW program.

The Department of Social Work reserves the right to have a student write a reflective essay regarding concerns that arise in a field setting, or if a student is dismissed from an agency. The purpose is to help the student to reflect upon the situation and the factors that led up to the situation and ways to consider a professional response to assist with student learning. Students must be able to reflect upon their behavior as an emerging professional social worker. This will allow the Field Education Coordinator to better assess a student's readiness for another field placement. The student may be required to do additional field hours should another placement be secured, and the additional hours will be at the discretion of the Field Education Coordinator. The additional hours will assist with orientation and entrance to a new agency to allow time for the student to integrate into a new agency and be able to demonstrate the field competencies in a practice setting. The Field Education Coordinator and/or Faculty Field Liaison may also develop a Performance Improvement Plan at the student's new field placement to assist the student with being successful. Information may be shared with the new field agency describing the reasons why a student was dismissed from a previous agency and what the student has done to develop professionally and learn from the previous field placement experience. Students may also be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students to address any concerns.

## Resources for Students

Office of the Dean of Students: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/dean-students.php>

University Wellness Center: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/health/index.php>

Office of Student Life: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/slo.php>

Center for Career & Professional Development: <https://www.udmercy.edu/current-students/cec/index.php>

University Ministry: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/ministry/index.php>

Psychological & Counseling Services: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/health/counseling.php>

Disability & Accessibility Support Services: <https://www.udmercy.edu/current-students/support-services/disability.php>

## Guidelines for Field Instructors

The following elements may be helpful for field instruction:

- Orientation of the student to the field site:
  - Clarify the organizational structure.

- Clarify accountability issues - who is responsible to whom at all levels of the organization.
- Clarify your supervisory styles - expectations, teaching method.
- Clarify your expectations regarding student's attendance at staff meetings.
- Set a mutually agreed upon weekly time period for the field instructor-student conference: one (1) hour minimum per week.
- Develop a student work schedule that should include a minimum of 16 hours per week. Student's time in field instruction should total 200 clock hours per semester.
- Pre-learning specifics:
  - Clarify the goal and objectives of the agency and in what roles/capacity client contact is made.
  - Work with the student to develop learning objectives for the semester.
  - Jointly review with the student the University of Detroit Mercy field evaluation form the instrument used at the end of the semester to assess progress.
  - Inform the student of various experiences, projects, programs within the agency.
- General expectations of the University:
  - The student must be allowed contact with clients, client groups, or client systems
  - The student is expected to have contact with clients, client groups, or client systems
  - The focus should be on learning rather than the number of clients seen/served.
  - The student is expected to attend in-service training activities which are available to regular staff members.
  - The agency is expected to provide the student with adequate office space, telephone availability, and any other essentials related to the performance of professional responsibilities.
- Communications between Field Instructor, Student, and Faculty Field Liaison:
  - The Field Instructor should consult with the Faculty Field Liaison when there is some question regarding the appropriateness of any agency assignment.
  - If the Field Instructor and a student are having communication issues, the Faculty Field Liaison should be contacted if the problem is unable to be worked out between them.
  - Any inappropriate behavior on the part of the student should first be approached in the conference between student and Field Instructor. If inappropriate behavior is not resolved, the Faculty Field Liaison should be contacted as soon as possible. (This also applies to any other professional/personal problems the student might experience.)
- Evaluation:
  - Evaluation of field instruction students is a continuous process including written as well as verbal feedback from the Field Instructor and Faculty Field Liaison. At mid-semester and the end of each semester, the agency Field Instructor completes an evaluation. All evaluative material is shared with the student. Students receive a letter grade for their field instruction. Field Instructors may

recommend a grade but the final responsibility for the grade rests with the Faculty Field Liaison.

- Field Instructors will complete an evaluation for each student at Fall mid- and end-semester and Spring end-semester. The Field Instructor recommends a grade to the Faculty Field Liaison who then is responsible for assigning a final grade.
- At the end of the second semester, the student must turn in an Evaluation of Field Placement which should be used in considering that agency for future placements.

## Acknowledgments

Resources from the North American Network of Field Educators & Directors (NANFED) were used in the development of this handbook.