**SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM**

***FIELD PRACTICUM MANUAL***

***GRADUATE***

***MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK (MSW)***

***Western Carolina University***

***College of Health and Human Sciences***

***Department of Social Work***

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Message from the Director of Field Education:

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Field Practicum experience portion of the Social Work Program. Our Department Head, faculty liaisons, agency field instructors and our entire faculty are committed to offering you a high quality and meaningful field experience.

The field experience is crucial in allowing you to put classroom learning into action as you prepare to practice as a professional social worker. Social workers are trained professionals and field experience is the signature pedagogy and cornerstone of this training.

Our field curriculum is designed to prepare social workers to develop beginning

(at the MSW Foundation level) and advanced (at the MSW Concentration and Advanced Standing Levels) skills to assist individuals, families, communities, and organizations cope with some of society’s most difficult challenges. Field experiences, in respective agency settings, will include the development of skills in areas including, but not limited to, work with children and families, poverty, the elderly, addictions, mental and physical illness, abuse or trauma and program/policy.

Social work is a commitment as well as a career; therefore, students should be committed to fulfilling all field requirements at the highest level. Faculty liaisons, agency field instructors and the Director of Field Education take their roles as preparing new professionals seriously. Thus, we have high standards for participation and continuation in Field Practicum, and students are expected to perform well. If you are committed to the profession of social work, which should be the case as you work to earn an MSW, we are committed to helping you succeed.

Again, welcome to the Field Practicum experience. If you have any questions or concerns about Field Practicum, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to working with you during this most exciting time of your social work training!

Regards,

Judy LeRoy Robinson, MSW, LCSW

Director of Field Education

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**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the Field Practicum Manual is to provide information regarding program goals and objectives, responsibilities of the student, field instructor, field liaison, and Director of Field Education and policies and procedures governing field instruction at the MSW level. This manual has been developed for agency personnel, students, and faculty.

The most indispensable component of graduate social work education is the field practicum. This experience gives students the opportunity to gain practical experience in preparation for professional social work practice. Through this component students are able to test their own values and attitudes and develop an awareness of self which is essential in social work practice. Students are offered the opportunity to learn by doing, translating their abilities and knowledge into action.

The field practicum is not just another social work content area but a dynamic learning situation. Some specific content is better taught in an agency setting; but basically, field instruction strengthens previous knowledge and gives awareness of the inter-relatedness

of theory, practice and underlying professional value systems. As a result, students will be able to transfer insight, knowledge, skill, and method into real life professional situations.

**MSW FIELD PRACTICUM**

The standard field placement at the MSW Foundation Level (first year) is three days a week for one semester. This is the second (usually the spring) semester of participation in the MSW Program at Foundation Level. Students must attain a minimum of 336 hours of supervised work in the field practice setting at the MSW Foundation Level.

The standard field placement at the MSW Concentration Level (second year) is three days per week, for two semesters (usually the Fall and Spring semesters, consecutively) during participation in the MSW Program. Students must attain a minimum of 672 hours of supervised work in the field practice setting at the Concentration Level. MSW students who have been accepted as Advanced Standing will have the same field practicum required hours as Concentration level students (672 hours). (Supervised field hours in the full time (two year) MSW Program will equal 1008 total attained hours).

At the Foundation, Concentration, and Advanced Standing Level, time lost due to personal reasons must be made up. Holidays will not be counted as placement days unless the student is actually performing assigned tasks during this time. Students are subject to applicable agency personnel policies during placement. Students are expected to notify their supervisor (field instructor) of any absence and to consult in advance about any change in schedule.

**MSW Foundation Field Practicum Objectives**

**The objectives below align with CSWE (Council on Social Work Education) and the WCU Social Work Program Competencies and Practice Behaviors. These 10 competencies and the corresponding 41 practice behaviors are reflected in the MSW-F Teaching and Learning Contract that each student will develop with their Field Instructor.**

1. Identify as a social worker and conduct themselves 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 differences in practice.
5. Advance Human Rights and social and economic justice.
6. Engage in research-informed practice and practice informed research.
7. Apply theories and knowledge of human behavior in the social environment.
8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.
9. Recognize and respond to the changing contexts that affect all levels of practice.

10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.

**MSW Concentration Field Practicum Objectives**

**The objectives below align with CSWE (Council on Social Work Education) and the WCU Social Work Program Competencies and Practice Behaviors. These 10 competencies and corresponding 23 practice behaviors are reflected in the MSW-C Teaching and Learning Contract that each student will develop with their Field Instructor.**

1. Identify as a social worker and conduct themselves accordingly.

1. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
2. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

4. Engage diversity and differences in practice.

5. Advance Human Rights and social and economic justice.

6. Engage in research-informed practice and practice informed research.

1. Apply theories and knowledge of human behavior in the social environment.
2. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.
3. Recognize and respond to the changing contexts that affect all levels of practice.
4. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.

**MSW Field Participation Requirements**

Participation in the Field Practicum is based upon:

* Continued successful completion of course work each consecutive semester of participation in the MSW Program
* Compliance with criteria for continuation in both the MSW Program and Field Practicum
* Have an overall 3.0 GPA each semester after acceptance into and beginning the Social Work Program. (See Social Work Program Student Handbook regarding action and procedure if a student’s overall GPA falls below 3.0).

**MSW Student Participation in Field Placement Process**

Prospective field placement students must attend pre-placement meetings held during the semester prior to placement and they must complete an Application for Field Placement, CHHS Student Agreement Form, CHHS Drug Screen Agreement, CHHS Criminal Background Check Agreement, a criminal background check (CBC) through our vendor (Certiphi), and verify that they have obtained liability insurance. After consultation with the Director of Field Education, they must arrange interviews at approved agencies and be accepted for placement by an agency according to deadline dates set by the Director of Field Education. The Director of Field Education is available for guidance and consultation during this process. The Director of Field Education gives final approval and authorization. A student who does not meet deadline dates may not be placed in a field agency.

**MSW Agency Selection**

Students will select agencies from information available in the department (see Field Notebooks in the SW Dept. Office) and in consultation with the Director of Field Education. With rare exceptions, the agency employee interviewing a prospective intern should be the same employee who will supervise the student. The interviews should be similar to a job interview. The agency person should determine, as much as possible, whether the particular student seems to have the necessary skills and maturity to perform well in that agency. The agency makes the decision regarding selection of the student intern, with final approval by the Director of Field Education. If the prospective intern is for some reason uncomfortable with an agency choice after the initial interview, the Director of Field Education must be consulted to resolve the issue or to pursue a different placement. Every effort is made to use agencies that provide a high standard of professional practice.

**Criteria for Selection of Field Agencies**

Field agencies are selected based on educational needs of the student and on agency interest and commitment to participation in the field education process. To be considered

for approval, the agency must meet guidelines set forth by CSWE as determined by the Director of Field Education. If the agency can provide meaningful learning experiences for students and if there is appropriate supervision, the agency will be visited by the Director of Field Education. When agencies are approved for student placements, the Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences, the Head of the Department of Social Work and the agency administrator signs an Educational Affiliation Agreement. Information about agencies will be provided to students to assist them in making informed choices about their placements. The quality of the learning experience of students in placement, the continued presence of an approved supervisor, and the geographic proximity to the Western Carolina service area are important considerations. Every effort is made to provide students with a wide and rich experience and diversity within the field setting. Agencies represent clients from diverse ethnic, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

**Employment Agency as Placement Agency**

The use of an employment site as a field site must be approved by the Director of Field Education. Approval is granted only if certain conditions are met AND the situation is educationally sound and appropriate for the particular student. The conditions are as

follows:

1. There must be an MSW (or an approved substitute) in the agency who is NOT

the employment supervisor and is willing and able to be a field instructor.

1. The field instructor cannot have any authority over the student’s employment status.

The field instructor must meet the qualifications required of all field instructors.

1. The field instruction tasks/assignments must be different from the employment tasks

AND must be in accordance with the Department of Social Work’s general educational criteria and those appropriate to the student’s chosen educational goals.

1. There must be evidence that role confusion (between student role and employee role)

will not occur. A general guideline is that role confusion will always exist in agencies with

fewer than 25 employees unless the student is housed in separate locations for the job

and the placement. This component wil be evaluated by the Director of Field Education.

1. The student must complete the Employment Based Field Practicum Application (request this from the Director of Field Education), with signatures of their work supervisor and proposed field instructor. This application details the above named components. The application must be turned in to the Director of Field Education on the due date for approval.

**Criteria for Selection of Field Instructors**

1. An MSW is preferred at the MSW level to serve as Field Instructor. However, a

Masters degree in a related field will be considered when necessary to provide a

unique field experience for a student.

2. A minimum of two years, relevant full-time social work experience.

3. Strength of employment at the agency sufficient to ensure familiarity with agency

policies and procedures and availability to meet student’s needs.

4. Willingness to act as field instructor on a continuing basis during the full placement

period and to participate in training required of all field instructors.

5. If the field instructor and the student have had a pre-existing professional or social relationship, this information must be shared with the Director of Field Education so the appropriateness of the placement can be determined.

## INTEGRATION OF CLASSROOM KNOWLEDGE AND THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

**MSW Field Practicum Seminar**

The MSW Field Seminar will be offered periodically (usually for five sessions) during each semester and led by a faculty member. Students will receive information about the regular meeting times of the seminar at the start of the semester. The seminar will be scheduled to meet the particular learning needs of the students in Field during any particular semester. Attendance at the seminar is mandatory and a part of the overall Field Practicum experience.

**ADDITIONAL FIELD POLICIES (MSW)**

**Individual Conferences with Student**

Each graduate student is welcome to schedule individual conferences with the Field Seminar Instructor, the Field Liaison or the Director of Field Education, to individualize learning and to enhance the social work perspective.

**Learning Contract/ Agency Supervisor/ Student Conference**

Adult education theory emphasizes the shared responsibility between the teacher and the learner for the quality and content of the learning-teaching transactions. In order to enable the student to become an active participant in the development of his/her educational experience, information that helps define the boundaries and foundations of the supervisory relationship and the content and process of the learning must be provided. The Learning Contract will be developed by each student in collaboration with the field instructor. MSW students are expected to take responsibility for development of the Learning Contract, using the supplied format. The student will receive group training from the Director of Field Education on how to most effectively develop the Learning Contract before the start of each level of internship. The learning contract will address the competencies and practice behaviors named above in this manual. A copy signed by the student and field instructor should then be sent to the Field Liaison for review, approval, and signature. (See appendix for Learning Contract Form).

The agency Field Instructor, the student, and the Field Liaison will meet during each placement period. A mid-semester and an end-of semester evaluation (see Appendix for forms) will occur among the three to help with the guidance and direction of both the students’ learning and FI’s teaching. It is also meant to give students an opportunity to share their views and concerns regarding their field experience.

**Student Assignments in the Field**

The Department of Social Work expects students to have a thorough orientation to the agency before becoming involved in direct or indirect practice activities. It is also expected that the students will be provided with a variety of micro, mezzo and macro experiences that reflect the practice behaviors and competencies previously outlined. In addition, students should be given workloads that allow for the regular processing of the professional work being done through both the regular weekly supervision times and at other times during their day as appropriate.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

The student’s primary obligation is to his/her own learning and professional development through the provision of social work services in the field setting in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics and the agency’s policies and procedures.

\*The NASW Code of Ethics can be found at <http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/code.asp>

The specific responsibilities of the student include, but are not limited to:

1. Take responsibility for learning.
2. Establish role as an intern within the agency.
3. Take responsibility for setting a portion of the agenda for the weekly one-hour

supervision

1. Be open to feedback from the field instructor to increase professional self-reflection and further knowledge and skill development.
2. Give thoughtful feedback to field instructor about learning needs (including

impediments to learning).

1. Understand and be sensitive to personal and cultural issues that might interfere

with one’s work with any client or client system.

1. Engage in and use self-reflection to improve professional practice.
2. Accept the potentials and limits of role in the practice of social work.
3. Form and maintain professional relationships with colleagues and other personnel within the setting and work effectively with others in groups and individually.
4. Transfer relevant knowledge and skills learned from each assignment to

successive assignments.

1. Behave professionally (e.g., reasonable time and workload management,

appropriate dress and personal conduct).

1. Fulfill documentation requirements of agency (e.g., client records) and school (e.g., seminar assignments based on field experience) in a timely and thorough manner. Prepare field course assignments during regular field hours.

**Absence from Field Agency**

Extended absences (more than two consecutive days) or absences in excess of the sick time allowed must be discussed with the Field Instructor and the Field Liaison. When disruption of the field experience, due to repeated or protracted absence, is determined to interfere with student learning and/or services to clients, a decision regarding the student’s continuation in the field placement will be made in accordance with the Problem Resolution Process outlined in this manual. Requests for the time off for religious observance and professional conferences should be assessed on an individual basis, and arrangements to make up time should be made in accordance with clients’ service needs and the student’s learning needs. Students are expected to notify field instructors in a timely and professionally appropriate manner if they need to miss due to illness.

**Disclosure of Student Trainee Status**

In accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics, social work students must identify themselves as student trainees to patients/clients either verbally or through the use of nametags (except in emergency situations where it is clinically contraindicated as determined by student) and in signing notes in records/chart and all other documents produced by student trainees for or on behalf of the field agency.

**Credit for Work Experience**

Students cannot and will not receive practicum credit for work experience prior to entering the MSW Program.

**Malpractice Insurance Requirement**

All students are required to have malpractice insurance. During the semester prior to their field placements, students will be given information and an application form for NASW malpractice insurance (see Appendix for links). It is the student’s responsibility to apply for insurance in advance so it will be in effect at the beginning of the placement period. MSW students must have documentation of insurance coverage for both Foundation level (year 1) and Concentration or Advanced Standing (year 2) field practicum placements.

**Physical and Mental Health Issues**

The social work program has a real and serious responsibility is for the well being of the client population served by the field placement agency. Occasionally, a student may have a physical or mental health issue that may affect his/her work with a particular client group. This information must be shared with the Director of Field Education at the time of the pre-placement interview.

If deemed necessary, the student should share relevant information about the physical or mental health issue with the prospective field instructor. The student will be supported in making this decision through consultation with the Director of Field Education.

Examples are diseases that may put the student or the client population at risk, or may necessitate the student having hours or activities modified in order to complete the required hours. Also included are students who may have a condition similar to the agency’s client population. All students, regardless of disability or special need, must complete 1008 in the two-year program and 672 hours at the Advanced Standing level hours and perform satisfactorily in the field agency.

**Criminal Records (Felony or Misdemeanor)**

The Department of Social Work expects students with prior convictions to inform the Director of Field Education of such convictions prior to placement. Laws governing work with children and other issues of moral turpitude preclude persons with criminal convictions from working in certain agencies or situations. As stated above, each student entering field will be required to complete a criminal background check. Failure of the student to inform the Director of Field Education of a prior conviction, and the conviction becomes known to the Department of Social Work, will be dropped from the field agency, and may result in dismissal from the Social Work Program.

**Drug Screens**

Select agencies may also require students to complete a drug screening prior to participating in a practicum at their agency. If a student produces a positive drug screen s/he may be dropped from the field agency. The MSW Admissions and Progression Committee will meet within one week of receiving the results to determine whether or not the student will be allowed to continue at another field agency or will be dismissed from the MSW Program. The student may remain in lecture courses while their case is being decided. Students who wish to contest the drug screen results may obtain another drug screen at their own expense within 24 hours of receiving the initial results.

In addition, any criminal charges as a result of drug or alcohol use that occur while a student is in attendance at WCU may also result in disciplinary action, including dismissal from the MSW Program.

**Conflict of Interest**

No student may be placed in an agency wherein he/she or an immediate family member was, or is, a client or a field instructor during the previous five [5] years. Since the Department of Social Work does not obtain specific client information from agencies or students, it is the responsibility of the student to decline (or not select) a placement based on this requirement. Students who want a placement that may create a conflict of interest are required to discuss the situation with the Director of Field Education before requesting or accepting the placement. Students who violate this policy will be dropped from the field placement.

**Possible Injury During Field Internship**

The student should note that, any medical service that may be required due to injury occurring while performing field duties is not covered either by the agency (as the student is not an employee and therefore not covered by workmen’s comp. programs), nor WCU. The student’s own medical insurance may or may not cover the medical treatment depending on that private plan. This is in accordance with the Affiliation Agreement signed between each practicum agency and CHHS/WCU.

**Disguise of Confidential Practice Material**

When students use case material from their agency (e.g. process recordings, case studies or presentations, meeting minutes, group recordings) they are required to observe confidentiality carefully by not using client names, agency names, staff names or other identifying information that could compromise confidentiality. This is in accordance with the CHHS Student Agreement that all students are required to sign.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF FIELD EDUCATION PERSONNEL

The persons responsible for field education from the Department of Social Work will include the Director of Field Education and those faculty members serving as Field Liaison in any given semester. The field instructor, or agency supervisor, is a professional (usually a social worker) in the field who has agreed to serve in this capacity. The duties of each are described below.

**Director of Field Education**

1. Identifies and develops new field agencies for field internships.
2. Acts as a consultant on all field education issues.
3. Conducts a pre-placements process with MSW students preparing to do their field placements.
4. Prepares and delivers training seminars for field instructors.
5. Ensures that all Council on Social Work Education standards are followed.
6. Responds to questions/inquiries from field agencies.
7. Facilitates meetings of field supervisors and prospective field students.
8. Provides leadership to Faculty Field Liaisons and input regarding final grades for Practicum.
9. Is responsible for the overall functioning of the field education program.
10. Maintains contact and information exchange with all agencies that have indicated interest in field placements.

**Field Liaison**

1. Serves as liaison between the Department of Social Work and the agency.

2. Consults with the student and field instructor (agency supervisor) about assignments, learning contract, evaluation, etc.

3. Serves as the student’s advocate in ensuring the Department of Social Work’s expectations of the agency are being met.

4. Serves as trouble shooter, problem-solver and mediator in the event that a problem in the field placement experience is identified (whether the problem rests with the student, agency, or field instructor).

5. Reviews/approves and provides feedback to the student and field instructor regarding the learning contract that is to be developed for each semester in field.

6. Visits the agency a minimum of once and contacts the FI via phone or email during the semester to engage the student and field instructor to insure the viability of the placement experience.

1. Serves as a general resource for students who need a sounding board, referral source, and/or general support regarding personal problems or life issues that arise (health, family, financial, housing, workload) that may interfere with the completion of the field experience or the student’s competence in the field.

8.The field liaison is also usually the instructor for the field seminar for any given MSW-F or MSW-C cohort.

## Field Instructors

1. The field instructor plays a key role in the professional education of the social work student. A field instructor who has a close professional and most continuous relationship with the student serves as both a role model and a teacher.
2. An early focus should be on educational assessment, which incorporates the

knowledge, skills, strengths, and limitations of the student for development of

learning goals and a learning contract. The assessment is based on a review of

previous education and work history, an evaluation of learning style, an

understanding of the student’s professional goals and identification of the strengths

and challenges with which the student approaches the identified learning tasks.

1. It is important for the field instructor to be aware of his/her own characteristic learning/teaching style, operating/communication style and knowledge and skills, strengths and weaknesses, as these will influence transactions with the student.
2. Field Instructors carry out three (3) different roles relative to each student: they are educators, teachers, and gatekeepers. As an “educator,” they guide and assess the

overall professional development of the student. As a “teacher,” they facilitate

learning opportunities for students and model for and observe the student. As a “gatekeeper,” they assist the Department of Social Work in assessing capacities/behaviors required of professional social workers.

1. Field Instructors are expected to provide students with relevant learning opportunities. Please see Field Practicum objectives at the beginning of this manual.

6. The specific responsibilities of field instructors at the MSW level include, but are not limited to, the following:

* Participate in consultation and meeting times with the Field Liaison and/or the Director of Field Education.
* Develop a Learning Contract with the student.
* Provide appropriate assignments for the student throughout the placement.
* On an ongoing basis, assess and provide feedback to students regarding their social work skills, professional behavior/identity.
* Identify and document student performance problems and inform the stundent, as well as the Field Liaison or Director of Field Education in a timely manner.
* Conduct a formal written evaluation of the student at mid-semester and at the end of the semester. Complete an evaluation of the Field Liaison and the Director of Field Education.

### Evaluation and Grading

The student receives a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grade for Field Practicum. The basis for the final evaluation will be the satisfactory behaviors of the student in terms of the objectives set forth in this manual and satisfactory completion of the learning contract. The field practicum evaluation should be done conjointly between field instructor and student. The basis for comparison would be where this student is in relation to where the student should be at this point in his/her field education experiences. The comparison should not be with a seasoned professional. The Faculty Field Liaison assigns the final grade based on the field instructor’s evaluation, their field contact with the student and field instructor, and possible consultation with the Director of Field Education.

The Field Liaison is evaluated at the end of each semester by the agency instructor and by the student. The field agency is evaluated by the student. The Director of Field Education is periodically evaluated by students, field liaisons and agencies.

## LEARNING AND TEACHING TOOLS

**Technical Standards**

The technical standards outlined below are required for admission, retention and graduation from the Department of Social Work at Western Carolina University. These standards, which are separate from academic standards, describe the physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral requirements of social work students, apply at both undergraduate and graduate levels. They are designed to provide reasonable assurance that students can participate fully in all aspects of coursework and the field practicum, with or without accommodation, resulting in successful graduation from the program.

**1. Observation: Students must be able to:**

* accurately observe clients to effectively assess their situations
* have functional use of the senses and sufficient motor capability to carry out the

necessary assessment activities

**2. Communication: Students must be able to:**

* communicate effectively with other students, faculty, staff, clients and other professionals and exemplify a willingness and ability to listen to others
* demonstrate effective communication in oral presentations, written assignments,

small group settings, and through electronic means

* perceive and interpret nonverbal communication
* use spoken and written English to understand the content presented in the program
* comprehend reading assignments and search and evaluate the literature
* demonstrate competency in writing skills

**3. Sensory and Motor Functions: Students must have sufficient sensory and motor abilities to:**

* attend class and complete the required number of hours during their field practicum
* maintain consciousness and equilibrium and have the physical strength and stamina

to perform satisfactorily in the classroom and in social work agency settings

**4. Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Functions: Students must have the ability to:**

* think critically, analyze and interpret objective and subjective data, and apply effective problem solving skills. These skills allow students to make proper assessments, use sound judgment, appropriately prioritize therapeutic interventions, and measure and report client outcomes.
* demonstrate skills of recall using long and short term memory, inferential reasoning, application of knowledge, and evaluation of predicted outcomes at appropriate levels in the program

**5. Self Awareness: Students must exhibit:**

* knowledge and openness to learning how one’s values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect thinking, behavior and relationships
* willingness to examine and change their behavior when appropriate and work effectively with others in subordinate positions as well as with those in authority

**6. Emotional and Mental Stability: Students must demonstrate the ability to:**

* deal with current life stressors through the use of appropriate coping mechanisms effectively by using appropriate self-care and developing supportive relationships with colleagues, peers, and others
* effectively use help for medical or emotional problems that interfere with academic and clinical performance

**PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

The Department of Social Work recognizes that preparation for professional practice requires more than scholastic achievement. The program expects students to exhibit behaviors that are consistent with professional performance. Such behavior is expected not only in the classroom, but through out the University and the larger community. Some specific examples of professional performance standards are outlined below

**Students must demonstrate:**

* A commitment to the goals of social work and to the ethical standards of the profession, as specified in the NASW Code of Ethics.
* The essential values of social work including the respect for the dignity and worth of every individual and his/her right to a just share of society’s resources (social justice)
* Behaviors that are in compliance with program policies, institutional policies, professional ethical standards, and societal laws in classroom, field and community.
* Responsible and accountable behavior by knowing and practicing within the scope of social work, respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements, and accepting supervision and criticism in a positive manner.
* A commitment to serve in an appropriate manner all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person’s age, class, race, religious affiliation (or lace of), gender, disability, sexual orientation and/or value system.

## FIELD PROBLEMS AND RESOLUTIONS

Students and field instructors are expected to read the descriptions below and to follow the General Problem Solving Procedure described at the end of this section. There are three general types of problems: Situational, Environmental and Inadequate Student Performance.

**Types of Problems and General Responsibilities for Resolving Each Type**

**I. Primarily Situational:** Illness, personal crisis, or other occurrences resulting in prolonged absence from the field agency or inability to engage in competent social work practice.

**Problem Identification:** Students are expected to notify both their field instructor, the Field Liaison and the Director of Field Education when personal situations will adversely affect their attendance or participation in field.

**Resolution Process:** The Field Instructor and student should endeavor first to resolve the problem. If further assistance is needed, the Field Liaison is responsible for mediating or negotiating a resolution of the problem with the field instructor and student. The Field Liaison will take into consideration the timing of the occurrence, the student’s performance to that point in time, and other such factors that might pertain to the situation. The Director of Field Education will be notified of the problem and may become involved as appropriate. The resolution should be documented in written form on the student’s Learning Contract and signed by the student, the field instructor, and the Field Liaison.

**II. Primarily Environmental:** Lack of adequate opportunity provided by the agency to accomplish learning objectives, little/no suitable field instruction, a personality conflict

between student and field instructor or other agency staff person that effect a negative

learning environment. In an instance of perceived discrimination or sexual harassment, the student must immediately notify the Field Liaison and the Director of Field Education. Problems caused by or that are solely a function of the field agency environment are

addressed by the Director of Field Education and shall have no negative grading consequences for a student.

**Problem Identification:** These problems are first identified by the student. It is, however, the responsibility of the Field Liaison, through phone calls, and additional visits (when indicated from student feedback or through meetings between the student and the Field Liaison) to monitor the student’s learning environment in the field.

**Resolution Process:** The Field Liaison is responsible for mediating or negotiating a resolution, with possible involvement of the Director of Field Education if appropriate. The Director of Field Education will work with the student to secure a new placement, if necessary. Students who change placements in mid-semester may be required to extend their time in the new field agency beyond the regular ending date.

**III. Primarily Inadequate Student Performance:** This may include:

* poor professional behavior or unsuccessful achievement of competencies for any reason, including but not limited to lack of ability or low motivation to learn social work skills, disrespect for clients or co-workers, inability or unwillingness to utilize feedback, or interpersonal qualities interfering with one’s ability to be professionally appropriate or engage in sound social work practice, actions that jeopardize clients or violate agency policy; OR
* ethical violations (see NASW Code of Ethics) threatening or criminal behavior, or behavior or performance not suitable to the profession of social work (violation of values/operating principles).

**Problem Identification:** It is the responsibility of the field instructor to identify student performance problems and notify the student and the Field Liaison.

**Resolution Process:** The field instructor must identify the behaviors, actions, or inactions that indicate performance problems or raise questions about the student’s suitability for the profession of social work. These behaviors must be communicated to the Field Liaison immediately upon identification and concern. These behaviors, actions, or inactions must be communicated to the student by the field instructor, who must also recommend/suggest/discuss ways the student might improve upon the behaviors, actions, or inactions.

Students experiencing performance problems may not change placements. Performance problems must be resolved in the agency in which they were first identified. If it is determined by the Field Liaison and Director of Field Education that the student is primarily at fault and the situation cannot be corrected, the student will receive an Unsatisfactory grade. The student may also be dismissed from the Social Work Program. Depending on the nature of the performance/situation and the timing (within the semester), the Field Liaison and the Director of Field Education may require a performance agreement between the student, field instructor, and the Department of Social Work. The performance agreement should be signed by all four (4) parties and consist of the following:

* Specific tasks/behaviors that need to be accomplished/demonstrated
* Goals to be reached or indicators of progress
* Criteria for assessing the extent to which concerns have been ameliorated
* Dates by which tasks/behaviors and goals are to be assessed

In the case of inadequate student performance or a recommended grade of “Unsatisfactory,” the Director of Field Education may request a faculty review on the student. A faculty review is a meeting of the student’s current or recent professors (in Social Work) and is organized and chaired by the Head of the Department of Social Work. The purpose of the meeting is to review the performance problems identified in the field and to make a decision regarding disposition of the student’s situation. The student will then meet with the Director of Field and the Head of the Department of Social Work to review the decision.

**A student who has two unsuccessful field practicum placements, for whatever reason, will not be able to re-enroll in the course but will be advised to change their major.**

A student who is dismissed or drops out of the program will not automatically be readmitted to the social work program. They must first consult with the Department Head and the Director of Field Education and then, depending on the situation, may be required to re-apply.

A request for change of Field Practicum agency by the student, once the practicum has begun will be considered by the liaison and Director of Field Education, **but such a change would only be allowed in very unusual circumstances.**

**General Problem Solving Procedures**

The purpose of these procedures is to clarify the roles of all concerned, to identify specific steps to take along the way, and to insure, as much as is possible, a smooth, problem-solving process.

1. Problems with a field placement should be identified as early in the semester as

possible.

2. Field instructors and students are encouraged to keep supervision notes that

identify topics discussed in supervision meetings.

3. Anyone in the field education loop—the student, the Field Instructor, the Field Liaison, the Field Seminar Instructor, the Director of Field Education, or field instructor—can initiate the problem-solving process.

4. The process involves communication verbal and/or written—between at least two of the parties.

5. The first level of the process can be informal, verbal communication. All three (Field Instructor, Field Liaison and student) should be made aware of the problem. If the

problem is resolved to the satisfaction of both parties within a reasonable period of time (no more than two weeks) then no formal written documentation of the problem is necessary.

6. If the problem is not resolved in a reasonable period of time, and/or if another problem surfaces, the problem must be documented by the appropriate person, and all three parties should receive a copy.

7. At this point, the Field Liaison should meet with the student and field instructor, possibly both, within a week of the written problem report, in order to facilitate a resolution. The Liaison should document contacts and meetings through a written summary, and give copies to the student and the field instructor.

8. Field instructors are expected to identify any known problems on the mid-semester evaluation form.

9. The substance of the Final Evaluation should be known to the student. Any problems should have been previously discussed and documented in supervision notes and with the Field Liaison.

10. The Director of Field education will be notified of field problems by the Field Liaison and may become involved in the process as appropriate to each specific situation.

## FIELD PRACTICUM AGENCIES

A complete list (with continuous new additions) and description of all field agencies available for student field practica is available in the Department of Social Work Office in the form of Field Notebooks.

**APPENDIX OF** **Field Practicum Forms**

All forms needed for field participation will be given to students or agencies by the

Director of Field Education or the Field Liaison as needed. They will also be

available to students at all times from the Director of Field Education electronically.

These include, but are not limited to:

* Education Affiliation Agreement (with each field agency kept and in the CHHS Dean’s office).
* Application for Admission to Field Placement
* Student Agreement for Field Placement
* CHHS Drug Screening Policy Agreement
* CHHS Criminal Background Check Agreement
* The Learning Contract (MSW-F and MSW-C level)

* Midterm Evaluation of Student Achievement of Learning Contract Competencies
* Final Evaluation of Student Achievement of Learning Contract Competencies
* Agency Evaluation of Field Liaison
* Student Evaluation of Agency and Agency Field Instructor
* Student Evaluation of the Director of Field Education and the Field Placement Process