



Field Practicum Manual

2018-2019

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Field Practicum Manual was compiled by the faculty & staff of the Social Work Program. Agency instructors assisted by contributing observations and ideas conceived during the Field Practicum. Senior social work students assisted by their observations and with the use of field placement evaluations of their field practicum. Fieldwork manuals of other Social Work Programs were also consulted in the preparation of this document (special thanks to Loras College in Dubuque, IA).

ACCREDITATION

The Social Work Program is housed in the School of Professional Studies. It is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The Program has been continually accredited since 1995. Accreditation ensures that the program of study meets or exceeds the curriculum standards, quality of instruction, faculty qualifications, integrity and level of professional competencies required by the Commission.

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Social Work Program
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Overview of Field Experience within the BSW Curriculum

The purpose of the fieldwork experience is to provide “hands on” practical experience in a social service or health care agency, institution, or organization. Field experience is an integral part of social work education, and is intended to complement the theoretical framework by allowing the opportunity to apply theory to actual social work situations. It is a regular part of the curriculum, and is viewed as a special kind of learning experience. Field placement provides students an opportunity to acquire an understanding of how social problems impact individuals, families, small groups, organizations, and communities. The placement enables students to learn the policies, regulations, and functions of social service agencies, networks, and community resources. Field placement allows the student to observe the social worker’s role in the problem solving process thus allowing them to learn beginning social work tasks and functions in preparation for generalist practice in social work.

Students integrate the practical field experience with supplementary learning activities in the Field Experience Seminar, which is designed to facilitate students’ reflection in depth. The field seminar provides the opportunity for students to share experiences with other field practicum students in a small group setting. Students have the chance to gain confidence via learning from both successes in working with agencies and through reflecting on their mistakes. Students also complete additional readings and assignments to fully integrate the values, knowledge, and skills of the field experience in the Field Experience Seminar.

The process of the field experience is guided by the learning contract. Students write a learning contract agreement together with the field instructor and Director of Field Education at the beginning of placement. The learning activities or practice behaviors created are based upon the 2015 CSWE competencies and practice behaviors. The learning contract guides the entire field experience through continual review of the practice behaviors to assure educational goal attainment. At the end of the field experience, the learning contract and the final evaluation of the student both serve as the instruments used by the agency instructor to measure success toward meeting a student’s competencies in field experience. The semester ends with successful completion of both agency field placement and field seminar. Please refer to the appendix for documents.

REQUIREMENTS: READINESS FOR FIELD PRACTICUM

Volunteer Hours: The student must complete 45 hours of voluntary service.

Course Work: SCWK 203, 250, 275, 304, 312, and 314 must be completed as prerequisites to field placement with a grade of “C” or above. Students may be in 316 and 345 concurrently with practicum, but only with approval of the Director of Field Education. An overall *and* social work 2.5 GPA is required. A student may *not* have any incompletes on record.

Placement Essay: The student must complete a 250 word essay on why the student is ready for practicum.

Field Readiness Training: The student must complete a Field Orientation and Mandated Reporter Training with the Field Director.

Ethics: The student must show a commitment to the principle of confidentiality and other provisions consistent with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics*.

Maturity: The student must have the maturity for entry-level social work: able to accept the extra self-discipline; able to effectively cope with personal problems (i.e. personal and educational/job stress, and avoid behaviors that put self or others at risk).

Criminal Background:

Students should be aware that criminal offenses may cause ineligibility for placement opportunities and/or liability insurance, which would prevent placement in a field agency. Background checks are often completed by agencies after an interview for field placement. Those wishing to obtain Licensure from the State of Illinois must be of “good moral character” – of which criminal background is taken into consideration. Please refer to Illinois Statutes 225 ILCS 20/19 for grounds for disciplinary action. The Social Work Program will follow the procedures of MacMurray College (found in “The Maggie” <https://www.mac.edu/maggie>) for unethical conduct of current students.

Academic Honesty: The student must maintain academic honesty. The Social Work Program will follow the procedures of MacMurray College (found in “The Maggie” <https://www.mac.edu/maggie>) for academic dishonesty.

Drug Free: The student must remain free from substance abuse and/or connections to sales or distribution of controlled substances.

Interview: The student record will be reviewed for satisfactory compliance with the above program requirements by the social work faculty prior to an interview. The interview will be conducted by your academic advisor.

Acceptance into Practicum: Once the above requirements are met with completion of a satisfactory interview with the social work faculty, the student is ready for practicum.

AGENCY SELECTION PROCESS

The selection of the field placement is a joint effort between student, faculty, and agency. The student chooses an agency(ies) to interview for the practicum from the database of agency listings. **Information about potential field placements can be found on the Program website (<http://www.macmurraysocialwork.com/practicum-sites.html>) or from communication with the Director of Field Education.** Students then review and select a list of agencies (usually up to three agencies) of their choice for interviews. They then meet individually with the Director of Field Education to further clarify any questions about their selections and/or the next steps in the process. If the student has a specific career interest that is not addressed within the present listings, then she or he may identify a different agency, as long as it meets with approval from the Director of Field Education.

The student is responsible for initial agency contact, submission of a current resume (application for fieldwork), and scheduling an interview visit at the agency site. The agency field instructor may wish to receive the student's resume and application for field work prior to the scheduled interviews. Students are strongly encouraged to interview at two or more agencies but, are not required to if their first choice interview results in a placement.

After the interview process, the student discusses his/her preferences for placement with the Director of Field Education. The student is placed in an agency based on the following criteria: the Director of Field Education's assessment of the student/placement match, student preference, whether the agency and agency field supervisor meet the criteria of the Social Work Program, and acceptance of the student by the agency and agency field supervisor. After the assignment for placement is made, the student is responsible for informing the agency field supervisors of agencies not selected by the student.

CRITERIA FOR AGENCY INSTRUCTORS

Ideally, agency field instructors should have a Master of Social Work degree from a CSWE-accredited program, or a Bachelor of Social Work degree from a CSWE-accredited program with at least two years of post-graduate social work experience.

In lieu of these criteria, the Program does accept field instructors with a master's degree in another human service field or a bachelor's degree in a human services field with at least four years of post graduate social work experience. Paraprofessionals employed by the agency may also be acceptable if they have at least five years of social work experience.

In situations where the agency field instructor does not have a social work degree, the Director of Field Education, by way of the weekly field seminar group and additional individual meetings with the student, will assume the responsibility of reinforcing the social work perspective.

Orientation for Agency Instructors

New agency instructors will be oriented by the Director of Field Education to the forms, procedures, expectations and desired outcomes of the Field Practicum on an individual or small

group basis prior to their taking on responsibility for a practicum student.

Evaluation

The student receives orientation, assignments, ongoing regularly scheduled supervision, and evaluation under the direction of the agency instructor. Agency instructors may rely on feedback from agency personnel, conferences, group or peer supervision, and the student intern to evaluate the student's performance. Ongoing evaluation of the student is done by the agency instructor at the agency through the supervisory process, and written evaluations at mid-term and at the end of the semester. At mid-term and semester end, the Director of Field Education will visit the agency site to discuss the student's agency experience, as well as, his/her personal and professional goal achievements. The student is also being evaluated by the Director of Field Education by his/her participation in the weekly field seminar and the completion of his/her seminar assignments. While the agency instructor recommends grades in their written evaluations, the final responsibility for grading rests with the Director of Field Education.

An evaluation of the placement and of the agency instructor's supervision is written by the student and shared with the agency instructor at their final evaluation conference. The agency instructor also submits a written appraisal of the field experience to be shared at the final evaluation conference. Both evaluations are submitted in to the Director of Field Education at the time of this final conference.

Criteria For Social Work Field Practicum Grades

The grade the student is assessed for Field Practicum is based upon both his/her agency work (75%) and the work completed in the field seminar (25%). While the agency instructor recommends a grade for the agency work, the final responsibility for the grading of the student's field practicum rests with the Director of Field Education.

It is understood that all evaluations of the student are based upon entry level BSW skills. The following criteria will be based on the information collected in the student's Final Evaluation from their Field Supervisor:

- A =** The student does excellent work. The student is hard working, enthusiastic, understands the instruction received, contributes significantly to the agency, and is very dependable. The student can complete tasks with minimal supervision.
- B =** The student is making satisfactory progress toward most practice behaviors and may be displaying some professional levels of performance, with occasional inconsistencies.
- C =** The student is making satisfactory progress toward many practice behaviors, and may be displaying some professional levels of performance, but with frequent inconsistencies.
- D =** The student is making satisfactory progress toward less than half of the practice behaviors and if the student is displaying some professional levels of performance in any areas of the practice behaviors, it is with frequent inconsistencies.

F = The student is making satisfactory progress toward few of the practice behaviors and not exhibiting any professional levels of performance in any areas of the practice behaviors.

PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS

Credits and Hours

The field practicum placement involves a block placement at an agency in one semester (full 400 hours and 12 credit hours) or two placements in separate semesters (200 hours each and 6 credits each) approved by the Director of Field Education. Students are encouraged to arrange this by the end of their junior status year. Only work performed within the agency setting and on practicum documentation meet the criteria set forth by the Council on Social Work Education. All majors must comply with the program requirements.

Placement should begin by the first full week of classes in the fall term of the senior year, and continues throughout the semester. Students should expect to work some evenings, weekends, or during school vacations to meet the hour requirement.

Field Seminar Class

Participation in field seminar class is an integral part of field placement. All students in fieldwork are required to attend the field seminar. The small group setting is conducive for students to share experiences of their field placement, as well as the knowledge and personal insights they have gained. Coordination of administrative details and the oral presentation of assignments also occur at these meetings.

Objectives:

Students in the field seminar groups are encouraged to:

- demonstrate knowledge of the agency in which they are doing field practicum and share this knowledge with other group members.
- share feelings on their adjustment to the professional role of the social worker.
- enhance their communication, observation, and listening skills.
- evaluate their experiences from a social work perspective.
- integrate coursework and field work knowledge, skills, and values through cognitive and affective processing.

Field seminar group meets once a week for two and a half hours. The Field Seminar class time does not count towards total practicum hours.

Journals

Research indicates that students benefit from journaling during field placement (Bogo, 2005, Fortune, A.E. et al., 2002).¹ In Field Experience Seminar, students will be asked to journal

¹ Bogo, M. (2005). Field instruction in social work: A review of the research literature. *The Clinical Supervisor*,

experiences while in placement. This allows students to reflect upon tasks completed in the field and more fully process those experiences. Information students choose to volunteer in seminar is drawn from the student journals and can help gain peer feedback. See these articles for further detail on benefits of journaling in field placement from the literature noted in this paragraph.

Documentation

Documentation is a vital skill and aspect to all social work. The use of effectively written records serves as a mechanism for communication and assists with accountability in the field.

Documents allow for professionals to communicate with one another. This communication assures the continuity of care for all clients/consumers of the social service, as it assists with coordination of information used in practice. The communication also provides written documentation for all answerability and liability assurance. Documents in the social work profession are subject to inquiries from sources within and outside of the agency and serve as a record for the agency. The importance of proper documentation cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, the student is responsible for all practicum documentation, as it also serves as an instrument for communication and accountability for the agency and student.

Practicum Agreement

The student must complete the Practicum Agreement with Agency and Field Program, prior to beginning the practicum. These documents must be read and signed by the student, field instructor, and the Director of Field Education.

Field Learning Contract and Evaluation Tool

Within **the first three (3) weeks** of field practicum, the student and the agency instructor will collaborate and identify the various methods to be used to achieve the Field Practicum practice behaviors. The learning contract is not an employee contract. The student is a learner rather than an employee. The student should be prepared to speak in detail with the agency instructor about what experiences the agency is able to provide. The learning contract should also fit with the student's specific interests and reflect what areas of social work are most meaningful to him or her. The learning contract should be taken seriously and given careful thought because it will serve as a guide for student learning competencies and behaviors throughout field placement. These methods must be approved by the Director of Field Education. Once approved, the Learning Contract becomes the basis for the student's learning experience in the placement. The learning contract serves as the evaluation tool at the mid-term and final evaluation.

If, at any time, the student, agency instructor, and/or Director of Field Education feel that learning practice behaviors are not being met, methods may be modified or changed by mutual agreement. The Director of Field Education must be made aware of any changes made in the learning contract. It is the student's responsibility to work with the agency instructor and the Director of Field Education to ensure the identified methods are giving the student and the best

24(1/2), 163-193;

Fortune, A. E., & Kaye, L. (2002). Learning opportunities in field practicum: Identifying skills and activities associated with MSW students' self-evaluation of performance and satisfaction. *Clinical Supervisor*, 21(1), 5-28.

opportunity to achieve the Practicum's competencies and practice behaviors and to keep all parties abreast of any changes.

Midterm and Final Evaluation of Student

The student is responsible for initiating the Midterm and Final Evaluation process at the half way point of competing field hours. The student will ask the agency instructor to complete the Midterm Evaluation section of the Field Learning Contract and Evaluation Tool at the midterm of the semester, but prior to the Midterm Meeting with the agency instructor and the Director of Field Education. The completion of the document is important, as this evaluation document will be reviewed at the Midterm Meeting. After review of the document, all parties will sign the evaluation.

At the end of the placement, the student will ask the agency instructor to complete the Final Evaluation section of the Field Learning Contract and Evaluation Tool at the end of the semester, but prior to the Final Meeting with the agency instructor and the Director of Field Education. The completion of this document is important, as this evaluation document will be reviewed at the Final Meeting. After review of the document, all parties will sign the evaluation.

Evaluation of Field Experience

The student will additionally complete an evaluation of the placement and of the agency instructor's supervision. The document is written by the student and shared with the agency instructor at their final evaluation conference. The field instructor also submits a written appraisal of the field experience to be shared at the final evaluation conference. Both evaluations are submitted in to the Director of Field Education at the time of this final conference

Report of Student Hours

The student is responsible for weekly documentation of hours spent at the agency. The student is responsible for completion of hours prior to the end of the semester. This report should reflect the number of hours the student works on agency business and on field practicum documents. The total hours weekly must be reviewed by the agency instructor and reaffirmed by their signature. These hours will then be reviewed by the Director of Field Education in the weekly field seminar. The Field Seminar class time does not count towards total practicum hours.

Safety Tips In Field

Students are to discuss issues around safety (i.e. potential safety concerns, agency safety protocols procedures) with the agency instructor within their field setting at the outset of the practicum. Students are also to review the safety tips in this manual and the material provided in the Field Seminar.

Students should be cognizant of safety for themselves during their field practicum experience. These tips were drawn from suggestions in the field instruction book (Ward & Mama, 2006) and Field Seminar class. Students are encouraged to stay alert for safety at all times during their field experience and never stay in an environment where students feel threatened. For further details regarding safety tips refer to Chapter 1 in the following book: Ward, K., & Mama R.S. (2006). *Breaking Out of the Box: Adventure Based Field Instruction*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books.

Automobiles

- Keep car doors locked at all times and windows rolled up and be careful not to leave any confidential materials in the car.
- Know/locate safety zones in an area and use them when needed. Safety zones would be a school, church, gas station, convenience store, fire department, police station, hospital or any area that is public and has people around.
- Park your car in a well-lit area if you are going to be working at night.
- Do not drive clients in your automobile.
- When you are going in your car for an appointment, make sure someone at your agency knows where you are going and your approximate return time.

Home Visits

- When you are on a home visit, never enter a residence unless your presence has been acknowledged by the occupant.
- Many agencies require you go on home visits with a coworker. If there is a policy such as this be sure to follow it strictly.
- When doing a home visit, if the door is ajar, knock and call out the client's name. If no response is forthcoming, leave.
- If on a home visit you suspect that the occupant is home but s/he doesn't answer the door, do not walk around the house peering in windows or knocking on other doors or windows. Leave and try to call the client by phone.
- After having direct or indirect contact with a client, wash your hands. If on a home visit, use pre-packaged towelettes.
- When on a home visit, look before you sit in order to avoid sitting on sharp objects.
- When on a home visit, try to sit on hard chairs rather than cushioned chairs.
- When in a client's home, do not partake of food or drink.
- If you are in a situation that requires you to have contact with bodily fluids, wear gloves.
- Do not attempt to pick up a client who has fallen -- call for emergency personnel.

- Do not give clients medication, even if it is their own.
- Do not accept money from clients unless you give them a receipt. The receipt should indicate the amount given to you, reason given to you and amount (if any) returned to client. Always keep a copy of the receipt for yourself and give a copy to the client. Be sure to document this event in the client's case record.
- If threatened by a dog, do not run, make any sudden movements or loud noises. Stand still and do not stare at the dog, but keep the dog in your sight. Slowly begin to back away from the dog. Do not turn your back to the dog -- or reach your hand out to it.
- Do not stay in a situation where you feel threatened.
- Make sure that you know where an exit is and that no one is blocking it

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Students with Disabilities

In coordination with the MacMurray College Office of Disability Services, appropriate accommodations will be made for students with special needs in the field placement program. Many of the local agencies have clients with disabilities. Several agencies employ persons who are disabled. Field education expectations can be modified and restructured to provide a complete field practicum for the students with special needs.

The Director of Field Education may serve as a liaison between the student with special needs and the agency, even making the initial contact in the selection process. Open discussion of expectations and limitations will be explored to ensure acceptance into the agency field placement, as well as a comprehensive field experience. If the student needs accommodations based on the impact of a disability, please also contact the Office of Disability Services at (217) 479-7176 to review and coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Sexual Conduct Policy

The MacMurray College Social Work Program supports the MacMurray College Sexual Conduct Policy found in *The Maggie* <https://www.mac.edu/maggie> . Additionally, each agency should have a sexual harassment policy that student will follow as well. Please see the Director of Field Education with any concerns or feelings of discomfort related to sexual harassment in the field.

Restrictions for Academic Credit

There are no exemptions from fieldwork based on prior experience. Academic credit for life experience and previous work experience shall not be given in whole or in part, in lieu of the field practicum, or of the courses in the professional foundation areas.

Paid Field Practicum

Although paid field placements are permitted, very few are paid positions. A paid placement must meet all the criteria for field practicum. In addition, students must be able to fulfill the objectives for fieldwork within the paid placement, and emphasis must be on the practicum as a learning experience rather than as paid employment. All paid practicum must be approved by the Director of Field Education.

Completing Practicum in Agency in Which One is Employed

Students who wish to complete their practicum placement in the agency in which they are employed must work closely with the Director of Field Education to ensure that the agency meets the Program requirements and that the student will receive a quality learning experience. The agency must understand that the student's assignments and their field supervision must be differentiated from the student's normal duties of employment and the supervision that coincides with it. The agency must be willing to accommodate a student's field instruction and attendance

to the field seminar class. They must also take care to ensure the assignments for completion of the practicum and the field supervision the student receives are educationally focused. If ultimately the student is approved to conduct practicum at their place of employment, the practicum will not begin until the Learning Contract is thoroughly reviewed, signed and approved by the Director of Field Education.

Breaks and Holidays

The College does not require students to participate in the field placement during scheduled breaks, final exam week, study days, or holidays. The agency instructor and the student will determine the necessity of student involvement during these times.

Insurance

The Social Work Program provides students with professional liability insurance coverage prior to beginning their practicum. The student obtains this coverage through MacMurray College. The College, through Travelers Insurance, provides professional liability insurance coverage for each incident. Should the student elect to purchase their own individual malpractice coverage, the student may contact the Director of Field Education for information on individual coverage options.

Changing Agency Placements

Problems may arise necessitating a change in agency placement. If a student feels their placement needs to be changed, then he/she must first discuss the reason for change with the Director of Field Education. Subsequent to this meeting, the student may begin the Grievance Procedure (see below). If a change is appropriate, then the Director of Field Education will initiate the change of placement. If the student is not satisfied with the Director's decision, then he or she may proceed with the rest of the Grievance Procedure.

Professionalism

Students are expected to adhere to professional social work values and ethical standards during placement at the field practicum site. Social work practicum students serve as representatives of the profession in the community. Therefore, all students must make a commitment to professional conduct and growth. According to the EPAS 2015 Competencies and Practice Behaviors, professionalism includes and is not limited to: making ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, and models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context; using reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations; demonstrating professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication; using technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and using supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior. A breakdown in professionalism negatively affects not only the students, but also the client population, the agency, and the Field Instructor.

Therefore, students should prudently consider their professionalism as it reflects themselves, their field agency, the MacMurray College Social Work Program, and the social work profession itself. Reports of unprofessional conduct of a practicum student will be extensively reviewed by the Director of Field Education. The practicum student, Field Instructor, and Field Director may attempt to remediate the unprofessional behavior. If the unprofessionalism continues, then disciplinary actions will result. Serious violations of professionalism may result in immediate disciplinary actions as deemed fit by the Director of Field Education. All violations of professionalism can result in disciplinary action including possible dismissal from the field practicum placement and or the social work program.

Termination of Agency

Students may be terminated from practicum for violations to the MacMurray College Student Handbook, the MacMurray College Social Work Program Student Handbook, the MacMurray College Social Work Field Practicum Manual, the NASW Code of Ethics, and/or agency policy and guidelines. The report of the violation will follow the Program Student Handbook Policy: Student Review System. A termination is an automatic no credit for field seminar. For serious violations, the student may be immediately terminated from the placement or dismissed from the program.

Grievance Procedure

If a student has a grievance related to the field placement, the following steps should be taken:

- The student should meet with the agency instructor, if possible, to make her or him aware of the problem and to discuss options for resolution.
- If the issue is not resolved with the agency, then he/she may meet with the Director of Field Education.
- If the issue is unresolved after meeting with the Director of Field Education, then he/she may meet with the Director of the Social Work Program.
- If the grievance is still unresolved, she or he may make an appeal to the Provost of the College.

All grievance procedures must be followed as outlined in the *Social Work Student Handbook*. The MacMurray College Social Work Program is dedicated to a system of fairness and due process. The procedures above are intended to resolve any issue with practicum to ensure the most educational and professional practicum experience possible.

The College's Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the College to maintain a Social Work Program which includes a fieldwork practicum that meets the accreditation standards of the Council on Social Work Education.