

Field Education

INTRODUCTION

Field education is an essential component of the full educational program offered by the School of Social Work. In field education, students have the opportunity to apply concepts and skills and to test their own abilities to work ethically and effectively with people who are seeking social work help.

The partnership between the School and the agency is a natural and necessary characteristic of field education. The field education agency provides a microcosm of the profession at work. The resources of agencies, including line staff, supervisors and administrators, provide critical components of the educational process.

The program could not proceed without the involvement of students with the agency and with the people the agency serves. Here students observe a group of seasoned professionals going about their tasks: the field instructor models the attitudes, behaviors and skills expected of the competent professional; the agency's programs reflect important social policies and issues whose analysis, implementation or change are important aspects of the student's learning. In addition, the operation and management of the agency provide important insights and understandings about the administration of social services.

Concurrently, the School contributes to the agency's goals and ongoing operation. The faculty's knowledge and skill and the scholarship produced by the faculty are offered for the improvement of services. The presence of students in the agency illustrates the promise for the future and the possibilities inherent in education. Taken all together - the agency, the field instructor, the faculty and the student - are the incorporation of a comprehensive educational experience.

This field manual represents the School's effort to clarify the components of the School: its mission, objectives, curriculum as well as the vital components of field education in the MSW program. It is hoped that the manual will assist all those involved in field education to carry out their respective roles.

The School, including faculty and students, are grateful to the agencies who so willingly share in the education of future generations of social work practitioners.

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Field Education Program

The field experience is an integral part of the Social Work Program. It is a special kind of learning experience which complements and "gives life" to classroom learning. It gives the students the opportunity to learn about people, about social problems, about service delivery systems, about helping, and about yourself as a helping professional. Students are placed in an agency to experience educationally directed experiences through which they can translate the knowledge, values, and skills acquired throughout the curriculum into professional practice with clients. The agency field instructor and the university faculty liaison closely collaborate to achieve this in the field instruction program. This is done through a semester long internship within a local human service agency. Students are able to observe and work directly with professionally trained and educated social workers within the context of generalist social work practice.

Social work seniors are required to successfully complete a 400 hour internship during their final semester, either in the Spring or Summer semester. This is done through 14 weeks of the semester interning 28-29 hours per week. This is the SOWK 489 course. Students are also expected to complete a 3 credit hour senior seminar class (SOWK 490) that is a co-requisite of the SOWK 489 course.

The precise scheduling of hours (days, evenings, weekends) may vary according to the agency needs, clients' schedules, and opportunities for student learning experiences. This is arranged between the student and the agency field instructor. In this process, the student works closely with the university field liaison and seminar instructor. Both are social work faculty members who provide leadership in the weekly seminar, visits the field site, and work cooperatively with the field instructor to maximize the student's learning experience. The field instructor is the individual in the agency who provides the direct supervision of the student's experiences.

Admission to Field

Students majoring in social work participate in a minimum of 520 hours of direct practice in an actual human service agency. This is considered the highlight of the program and occurs through **two** internships under the supervision of a trained professional social worker. The first internship opportunity occurs during the pre-social work phase usually in the sophomore year through a ten-hour-per-week placement for a minimum of 120 hours, and the second during the professional social work phase for 400 hours, along with a three-hour weekly seminar, for an entire semester (Spring or Summer) during the senior year. In addition to submission of the portfolio to the student's advisor, an application is required for admission into both courses. Once the application is completed, it is to be turned into the Coordinator of Field Education. An interview will then be conducted with each student to better determine his or her placement. These experiences foster the integration of empirical and practice-based knowledge and promote the development of the student's professional competence in the area of generalist social work practice.

Field Policies

Admission to Field Instruction Program

To be eligible for field instruction, a student must:

1. Complete all academic coursework required to graduate with a BSW.
2. Possess a GPA of 2.7 in social work courses and overall GPA of 2.5.
3. Have no unresolved concerns regarding professional behavior, as outlined in the Waldron College Standards of Professional Practice Education.
4. Have access to transportation to and from field agency.

Field Instruction Placement

Initial planning for the senior field experience begins with the student's admission to the School of Social Work.

1. The student works with the assigned faculty advisor in identifying educational needs and learning experiences desired, occupational plans, and a tentative semester for field instruction.
2. The student notifies the Field Coordinator in writing, of intent to enroll, by April 1 for placement the following spring/summer.
3. The student completes an application form and returns it to the Field Coordinator by September 15 for placement the following spring/summer.
4. The student meets with the Field Coordinator and a tentative match between the student and an agency is made.
5. The agency is notified of the tentative placement. The student contacts the agency for a placement interview. The student brings to the agency a current resume' for the interview.
6. If the student and the agency agree to the placement, (the student must meet any additional requirements set forth by the placement agency, i.e. fingerprints, drug screens, background check, immunizations), the student is officially placed at the agency. If the student and the agency do not agree, the matter is referred to the Field Coordinator.

Schedule of Field Experience

The student is expected to intern full-time at the agency for an academic semester for 400 hours. The precise scheduling of hours (days, evenings, weekends) may vary according to the agency needs, client's schedules, and opportunities for student learning experiences. This is arranged between the student and agency field instructor. **Any exceptions to this block placement must be approved by the student's Academic Advisor, Field Coordinator, and BSW Program Coordinator.** The student participates in field instruction seminars held at the main campus or extended campus during the course of the field placement. These seminars include an orientation on the first day of the academic semester and weekly three-hour seminars.

Absence from Field Placement

There may be times when a student misses a regular scheduled field time due to illness or special situations. This time must be made up. Making up this time is to be arranged between the student and field instructor.

Holidays

Field agencies honor Radford University holidays as indicated by the academic calendar. Exceptions to these are by mutual agreement between the student and field instructor prior to the beginning of the field placement. Arrangements for continuing of client services for which the student is responsible are worked out between the student and the field instructor. This agreement must be included in the learning agreement.

Liability Insurance

All students enrolled in the field education program at Radford University are required to carry personal liability insurance in the amount of 1 million/3 million. Please see website, http://sowk-web.asp.radford.edu/field/field-forms/field-forms_1.html for liability insurance resources. Students are responsible to submit a copy of individual liability coverage to the field office by January 10 (Spring) and April 10 (Summer). If an employment-based practicum has been approved for the student, while in the role of a student at the agency, the student MUST have individual liability insurance in their name. Students cannot be a part of group coverage.

Student Confidentiality Waiver

The School of Social Work has adopted a Student Confidentiality Waiver. The field placement is a vital component of your social work education, and every effort possible must be made to match each student with the most appropriate placement. As such, each student should carefully read the waiver and sign it to assist the School in ensuring that any potential problems with field placements may be avoided. See form on website, http://sowk-web.asp.radford.edu/field/field-forms/field-forms_1.html

The Calendar

Students will negotiate holidays with the field agency prior to the beginning of the field placement. This agreement must be included in the learning agreement.

Students must complete all field hours over 14 weeks of the semester. Exceptions might be granted for rare circumstances and on a case-by-case basis. Any exception to a 14 week internship must be approved by the Field Coordinator.

Assigning Grades/Attending Seminars

The Seminar Instructor teaching the field seminar will assign the grade for SOWK 490. Seminar attendance and performance will enter into the grading process. Seminars must meet weekly for 2-3 hours in face-to-face format. Case presentations will be incorporated into the seminar. Students are expected to attend all seminar sessions. The Field Liaison, after consulting with the Field Instructor, will assign the grade for SOWK 489. Students must complete all of the hours required for field. These hours will not include time spent in seminar.

Field Instruction with Current or Former Employer

It is the expectation of the School of Social Work that students complete field practicum in new settings. However, in special circumstances, an option to have an Employment-Based Field Practicum is available. The practicum must be educationally focused, and must meet the educational objectives of the BSW curriculum. The intended goal of an employment based practicum is to allow the student to continue employment while completing an educationally appropriate field practicum supervised by a BSW/MSW practitioner.

Expectations of Agency:

- A.** The agency must offer sufficiently diverse educational experiences that will enhance the student's knowledge base and degree of expertise;
- B.** Documentation that the student is not a probationary employee (or that probation has been waived by the agency) or is an employee in good standing
- C.** The agency administrator must agree that students complete their required field practicum hours and have time to attend classes and field seminars. It is expected that the student discuss and

- negotiate the required time with their employer.
- D. Radford University School of Social Work requires all students to purchase individual liability insurance coverage. If the employment based practicum is approved the student must submit proof of student liability insurance distinct from their agency coverage.
 - E. The agency must be affiliated formally with the School of Social Work and agree to provide the student with a Radford University approved agency field instructor. The Field Instructor must have a BSW/MSW degree from an accredited institution and have two years postgraduate experience. The assigned Field Instructor is expected to attend all orientation and scheduled field academy seminars.
 - F. The proposed field instructor is not the student's job supervisor and has a MSW degree plus two years post grad experience (for MSW students) or a BSW degree plus two years experience for BSW students. If an approved field instructor is not available, the Field Coordinator will collaborate with the agency to designate an onsite task supervisor and appoint an external field instructor to conduct the weekly educational supervision.
 - G. Field assignments in the agency must have an educational focus, must differ significantly from the student's current or past job assignments, and must be in a different (i.e. separate) program area.

Expectation of Students:

Process

(Students must submit written documentation that explicitly addresses the agency expectations)

Student must meet with their advisor to discuss the proposal and submit a completed proposal packet to the field office **(Semester before field begins)**.

BSW (489) spring placement	10/1
BSW (489) summer placement	2/1
MSW (641)	3/1
MSW (791)	3/1

It is the student's responsibility to forward the proposal to the Field Coordinator. Due to the amount of mail received during the admissions process it is advised that all students submitting employment based proposal contact the field coordinator to ensure proper receipt of the proposal.

1. Proposal should contain:
 - A. Justification and description of the proposed placement with the learning objectives. Students must provide a description of the proposed field placement responsibilities and how they demonstrate the achievement of the learning objectives.
 - B. Provide a current job description and the name of the current supervisor.
 - C. Provide field placement job description, completed agency agreement, the name of approved field instructor and completed field instructor sheet with resume'.
 - D. List the difference between the current job and the proposed placement. Students who are using a new job must provide documentation of start date.
NEW job is defined as new employment within three months of beginning practicum.
 - E. Letter of approval from an agency executive responsible for human resource decisions. Should contain the following:
 - i. Agency executive in charge of human resource decisions and the
 - ii. Current supervisor must provide the field office with written documentation approving the employment based field placement.

F. Completed Field Application

3. Field Committee will review the proposal and provide the student with a written decision within 30 days.

The process to coordinate and approve an employment based practicum is lengthy. Please allow time to complete the forms and submit them to the field coordinator in a timely manner.

Changing Placements

Field instruction placements continue throughout the academic year. Changes in placements only occur when there are extraordinary circumstances. Changes are not made as a matter of course. Should problems arise in the field placement, the following procedures are to be followed:

1. Student is encouraged to voice their concerns immediately to the Field Instructor and to the Faculty Liaison.
2. Student, Field Instructor, and Faculty Liaison discuss concerns with all parties, regardless of the source of the perceived or identified problem.
3. If the problem cannot be resolved, the Faculty Liaison contacts the Field Coordinator.
4. The Field Coordinator determines, in consultation with the Faculty Liaison, whether the placement is to be terminated. If the placement is not terminated, the Faculty Liaison, the student, and the Field Instructor are expected to continue problem solving until the situation is resolved.
5. If the field placement is terminated, the Field Coordinator discusses other options with the student. The Field Liaison will then complete the Field Placement Change Request form that is provided in Appendix d. The student, Field Liaison, Field Instructor, Advisor and Field Coordinator sign the document and then it is entered into the student's academic file. The Field Coordinator may wish to consult with the MSW Coordinator, in working out a resolution to the problem.
6. The Field Coordinator will make at least one further attempt to place the student in a field agency.
7. If a field placement cannot be secured, the matter is referred to the BSW Coordinator and Director for disposition. The decision regarding the student's continuation in field is made by the Director. (See the BSW Student Handbook for Course and Field Review Processes.)

Field Agencies

Selection

Students in the Field Instruction Program are placed in human service agencies under public or private auspices. Either an agency or the Radford University School of Social Work may initiate the procedures designating an agency as a field instruction site. The Coordinator of Field Instruction and the agency executive negotiate a working relationship based on the criteria stated below.

If a working relationship is successfully negotiated by the Coordinator of Field Instruction and the agency executive, a written statement of this agreement is sent to the appropriate agency representative. The agreement is signed by the Coordinator of Field Instruction, the Agency Director (or his/her designated representative), the Director of the School of Social Work and Radford University's Director of Material Management/Contracts.

Criteria

1. The agency's philosophy, goals, programs, and policies are compatible with professional social work standards.
2. The agency board, administrator, and staff are committed to the field instruction program, its goals and objectives, and due process protection of students as a significant function and responsibility of the agency.
3. The agency is in good standing in the community. It qualifies for membership in those standard setting bodies - national, state and local - appropriate to its field of practice.
4. The agency's staff is large enough to maintain and develop its basic program without reliance on students.
5. The agency administrator and staff are willing to cooperate with the university in planning for supervision and evaluation of placed students.
6. The agency can make available desk space, supplies, telephones, and clerical services for the use of the Field Instruction student. The agency can make available a qualified field instructor for the placed student.

Criteria for Selection of Field Instructors

Field Instructors are chosen on the basis of:

1. Practice competence.
2. Skill in teaching and supervision.
3. Positive approach to social work education.
4. Ability to be creative and imaginative.
5. Ability to relate the student's field experience to academic learning.
6. Social work education.

Field instructors are committed to meeting the requirements as outlined on page 11, under Roles and Expectations, The Agency.

Roles and expectations

Student

While the Field Coordinator, the Field Instructor and the Faculty Liaison work to provide a quality field instruction experience for students, the student is expected to fulfill a number of responsibilities falling under two categories: the placement process and the agency experience.

Once the student begins the field placement, the student

1. Has agency expectations made clear, is prepared for and receives supervision on a regular basis, is actively involved in the social work tasks of the field setting, and participates in the evaluation process.
2. Acts as a mature, professional person at the assigned agency. The NASW Code of Ethics is used as one criterion for determining what is professional conduct.
3. Maintains confidentiality on matters pertaining to clients.
4. Arranges for transportation to and from the agency and, when necessary, arranges for off-campus living accommodations.
5. Negotiates with the agency field instructor a learning contract at the beginning of the placement.

6. Notifies the agency field instructor if the student must be absent from the field placement.
7. Completes all written assignments satisfactorily.
8. Participates in the field placement seminars held at the University.
9. Prepares for and constructively uses supervisory conferences.
10. Arranges with the agency field instructor for the termination or orderly transfer of cases or projects before leaving the agency.

Faculty Liaison/Seminar Instructor

The roles and responsibilities of the liaison include:

1. Monitoring and assessing agencies, Field Instructors, and students' learning experiences, including the review and approval of the student's learning agreement;
2. Assisting students with the integration of course work and practicum;
3. Assisting Field Instructors with developing teaching skills and providing them with course outlines and other materials;
4. Assisting in resolving problems between students and Field Instructors or other agency issues
5. Meeting with the student and the Field Instructor a minimum of three times during the academic semester; and
6. Assigning the student a grade in consultation with the agency Field Instructor at the end of the semester;
7. Coordinating and facilitating the field placement seminar.

The Agency

1. Interviews a prospective field student and accepts or rejects a student.
2. Considers the student for placement without respect to race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual preference, age, religion, disability (unless student is not able to function in the agency setting with accommodations), or political belief.
3. Designates a qualified Field Instructor who has the major responsibility for structuring the student's learning experiences. The Field Instructor must:
 - a. Oversee the student's learning experience, ensuring that the experience is educational in nature;
 - b. Participate in carrying out the educational objectives of the field instruction curriculum;
 - c. Oversee the development of the Practicum Learning Agreement with the student;
 - d. Provide a range of appropriate practice experiences aimed at the student's professional growth;
 - e. Provide a minimum of one hour of one-to-one or group supervision per week;
 - f. Meet with the Faculty Liaison a minimum of three times per semester;
 - g. Engage in telephone consultation when necessary;
 - h. Provide an orientation for field students;
 - i. Attend twice yearly field instruction seminars at the University;
 - k. Provide input into the ongoing development of the School's curriculum and program;
 - l. Recommend student's semester grade.
4. Provides the field instructor with adequate time to carry out responsibilities to the student.
5. Advises the Faculty Liaison and/or Director of Field Instruction of policy and service changes in the agency.
6. Provides necessary space and facilities (such as telephone, clerical services, and access to client records) for each student.
7. Provides the student with transportation or mileage reimbursement, for field assignments that take the student outside of the agency. If agency policies do not permit this, the student is informed of this before the field assignment is accepted

SUGGESTED FIELD PLACEMENT EXPERIENCES

Agencies differ from one to another and situations within agencies change, just as students differ and change. The development of a stimulating program by the individual field instructor is the essence of good education. Nevertheless, there are certain types of experiences that should form the foundation of any student's field instruction experiences.

The following should be developed by the field instructors in their own settings and in the most meaningful way possible to the student.

1. Orientation:

The students will be strangers in the agency and will need some orientation. Some advance preparation is helpful, such as prepared desk space, personnel forms, agency literature. The first several days should be structured. There should be introductions to the staff and director. Some familiarity with office procedures should be provided the student. Orientation should be a learning experience in how to become acquainted with all new agencies.

2. Development of Professionalism:

The student needs to know how she/he is to be designated at the agency and how she/he is related to the work of the agency. She/He needs to have a recognized place there and understand the role of the others in the agency. This is the first step toward the development of a professional self.

Next is the development of a professional relationship with the supervisor. She/He needs to understand the nature of their relationship, the purpose and place of supervision, the time scheduled for her/his conferences, and her/his responsibility in making the supervisory experience as meaningful as possible. Confidentiality was learned in the classroom. It should be internalized in the field instruction through working with individuals, groups, and the community. Self-awareness and the conscious use of self should be a significant part of the developing professionalization of the student.

3. Interviewing:

Each student has studied and has experience in interviewing. The field instructor should add to this base by assisting the student to plan, conduct, and evaluate her/his interviews. Field instruction is an educational program and not an apprenticeship, so specific instruction in this area is essential.

4. Developing relationships:

The development of relationships is a fundamental part of generic social work and experiences should be planned to enhance this ability of the student. As the semester progresses, this experience should extend to experiences that develop professional relationships. The student should be helped to see what such a relationship entails, and that there is a need to demonstrate the beginning professional use of self.

5. Groups:

The student must have some awareness of the importance of groups and develop some skills in relating to them. The student needs to understand the principles of group dynamics and be able to apply these principles in practice.

6. Community Activities:

The student needs to understand the relationship of the agency to the total community. Identification of community social problems and other agencies working in the same field is a first step in accomplishing this objective. Attendance at community meetings and participation in

planning community change is desired wherever possible.

7. Obtaining information, analyzing situations, and working toward change:
The students involved in field experience will have taken a variety of courses in the Social Work Program, including Social Welfare and Social Work Practice courses. The field experience should provide them with the opportunity to apply the generic concepts of social work. Reading cases and observing others is an excellent beginning, but the students will need to be involved in actual work with the clients. They need experience in obtaining information, analyzing situations, and planning change. It is essential that all students have experience in assessing and working through problems with individuals, groups, and the community.
8. Summaries, correspondence, and recordings:
Every student should have experience in recording social work data, summarizing material, and writing letters.
9. Evaluation:
The student should learn that evaluation and feedback are important in the field of social work. Self-evaluation is an important part of this evaluation process and should be a continuous process. The final evaluation of the student should be a recapitulation of previous developments.

THE STUDENT-AGENCY LEARNING AGREEMENT

The Student-Agency Learning Agreement is an approach to learning in the field instruction program. The agreement is developed jointly by the student and the agency field instructor in the beginning weeks of the field placement and revised periodically. The faculty field instructor will assist the student in the actual writing of the learning agreement. The purposes are:

1. To facilitate a practice centered and diversified learning experience for the student that fits within the overall goals and programs of the agency.
2. To give the student an opportunity to participate in the planning of the field placement.
3. To ensure that the student understands the agency's expectations of the student.
4. To identify criteria for measuring progress.
5. To facilitate a practice-centered and diversified learning experience for the intern that fits within the overall goals and programs of the agency.
6. To give the intern the opportunity to participate in the planning of the field placement.
7. To ensure that the intern understands the agency's expectations of the student.
8. To identify criteria for measuring progress towards meeting established learning objectives.

Guidelines

1. The agreement is flexible. It can be changed-or adapted as the student's learning opportunities change during the course of the field placement.

Example: It may be agreed that the student will plan and carry out a fund raising project for the agency. In the course of the field placement, circumstances make this impossible. The agreement, then, is accordingly revised or adapted.

2. The agreement begins with a description of the student's field assignment. This includes an identification of the range of learning opportunities available to the student. The information may be shared at the time of the initial interview.

Example: The student placed at the agency will have the opportunity to do intake, short-term counseling, crisis phone intervention, writing formal social reports, and editing a newsletter.

3. The second part of the agreement contains the student learning goals and the specific behavioral objectives the student chooses to do in coordination with the agency to achieve those goals. **The learning goals correspond to the objectives of SOWK 489/490** as they fit with the program goals of the agency, as well as the personal learning goals of the student.

Example: Learning goal - to learn more about human service agencies used by the field placement agency.

Behavioral Objectives: By specified date the student will be able to describe orally (or in writing) to the satisfaction of the field instructor the programs and services of five agencies used by the field placement agency.

Learning Agreement Format

Each intern will develop a learning agreement around the given five goals. The agreement will contain (1) each goal, (2) several measurable, dated, behavioral written objectives for each goal, and (3) tasks for achieving the objectives. Each goal, accompanying objectives, and tasks and criteria should be typed on a separate page.

FIELD EVALUATION PROCESS

Evaluations are an integral part of student learning. Ongoing evaluation of a student's progress in field is essential to analytical development and self growth. It is encouraged that each student undergoes continuous evaluation of their own professional skills and educational integration of coursework into the field setting. Therefore, a formal midterm and final evaluation process is to be done. Midterm and final evaluations are completed by both the student and the agency field instructor, on separate forms. This is an opportunity for the student and field instructor to engage in further dialogue as to the student's adjustment to the practicum setting, their emerging strengths, and any limitations or concerns regarding student's performance.