

Field Education Manual

Master of Social Work Program

California State University, Northridge

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I. GENERAL OVERVIEW

A. Philosophy

The philosophy of the California State University, Northridge (CSUN) Field Education Program is that field practice supplements and reinforces classroom instruction through the utilization of a field practicum site. The practicum offers students an opportunity to come in contact with a variety of populations that have various types of needs and problems reflective of the population the student would encounter in future practice. In the practicum, the student is able to go where the client population is located, provide a service, and assist in meeting the individual, families, groups, organizations, communities, and societal needs. The practicum plays a vital role in the preparation of competent future social work professional practitioners. In addition to the skills and theoretical knowledge needed for direct service with various client systems, students also gain a hands-on understanding of the social work profession's value base, its expectations in terms of practice and its codes of conduct, communication, and protocols.

B. Council on Social Work Education

Field Education is recognized by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) as the "signature pedagogy" of social work education. The CSUN MSW Field Education Program adheres to the CSWE's Educational Policy, Sections 4 and 5. The MSW Program administers field education consistent with program goals and objectives that emphasize the importance of multicultural, multiracial focus on human systems and the helping process. It provides for a minimum of 900 hours of field education, admits only those students who have met the program's specified criteria for field education, has a written criteria for selecting field placements, a process for monitoring students and maintaining contact between the Field Liaison and agencies, and a method for evaluating students and the effectiveness of agencies providing field instruction.

C. Field Education Experience

The fieldwork experience is an extension of the classroom. It is designed to provide a challenge to the student, exposing them to the myriad of social work practice opportunities. The fieldwork experience is designed to engage students in supervised direct service at macro, mezzo, and micro levels. The fieldwork experience provides students with the opportunity, under supervised conditions, to apply theories and knowledge, learned in both the Foundation and Concentration-year courses, of social work practice. Additionally, the fieldwork experience provides students an opportunity to reflect on their learning and to experiment and develop confidence in the skills they are developing during the experience. It is an integral part of the preparation process for students for entry into the social work profession and allows them to develop a range of intervention techniques and strategies suitable for use in diverse practice settings, with a variety of cultural, ethnic, and racial groups.

Each student is given assignments that build upon each other, focusing on the outcome goals of a self-directed and competent practitioner. Emphasis in the Foundation-year (first year) of fieldwork is placed upon developing appropriate foundation social work practice skills and knowledge.

During the Concentration-year (second year), the student is expected to develop increased insight and depth of understanding of agency and/or client systems and social work practice skills via exposure to a variety of experiences. Students may also be exposed to diagnostic, leadership, and administrative skills.

The fieldwork experience is tailored to the individual student's needs in an ongoing assessment process involving the student, Field Instructor, and Field Liaison. During the first few weeks of the

placement period, a Learning Contract will be developed between the student and the Field Instructor. The Learning Contract will specify learning objectives for the student, the experiences and activities in which the student will participate to meet these learning objectives and specific timelines for their implementation and completion.

D. Selection of Agencies and Field Instructors

The selection of agencies for field education is an important part of the Master of Social Work Program. It is the responsibility of the Field Education Program to determine an agency's suitability for student training and to work closely with interested agencies in this process.

Potential field education sites may be identified in a number of ways. Agencies may request students or may be suggested by a student, faculty member, alumnus, or community representative. An agency assessment is conducted by the Director of Field Education, Field Coordinator, CalSWEC Coordinator, or Field Liaison. The assessment covers topics such as: the function and service of the agency; possible student assignments and availability of resources for the student; level of practice competence; and special requirements for student placement. The agency is also provided information pertaining to curriculum, field requirements and expectations regarding assignments, supervision, and evaluation.

I. General Criteria Used in Selection of Agencies

- The agency's philosophy, goals, programs and policies are compatible with professional social work standards and the agency practices are consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics.
- The agency is compliant with Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and in the delivery of services, no person shall be excluded from participation or denied benefits or is otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of that agency or center on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- The agency maintains a working and learning environment free from discrimination and harassment of students and employees (refer to MSW and/or University policy).
- The agency is in good standing in the community.
- The agency is large enough to maintain and develop its basic program without reliance on students.
- The agency's training program must be compatible with the MSW Program's educational objectives.
- There should be a correlation between the agency and the program's Urban Family Practice Perspective so as to provide an integrated class/field curriculum and a consistent learning experience for the student.
- The agency is committed to the Field Education Program, its goals and objectives, and due process protection of the student.
- The agency will support staff time availability for effective supervision and professional learning, including participation in the MSW Program's orientation, field instruction training, and Liaison visits. It is expected that students receive a minimum of one (1) hour of weekly supervision for Foundation and Concentration-year students.
- The agency should provide a range of assignments on an ongoing basis that are appropriate to the student's educational needs. The student work load should reflect opportunity for involvement in varying modalities of service as well as exposure to diverse populations.

- The agency must provide the necessary space and facilities, including privacy for interviewing.
- The agency is willing to sign a Field Practicum Agreement with California State University, Northridge.

2. Criteria Used in the Selection of Field Instructors

- Field Instructors must hold an MSW degree from an accredited program of social work and must have two years of MSW experience.
- Field Instructors supervising Concentration-year students should be licensed at the LCSW level when applicable.
- Field Instructors must be committed to the teaching function of social work field education.
- Field Instructors must have an interest in, and time to fulfill, the responsibility of teaching social work students.

3. Requirements of Field Instructors

- A Field Instructor Information Form.
- A resume which includes:
 - Educational Experience
 - LCSW number if applicable
 - Work experience for at least the past five years, including job titles, agency names, length of employment, and description of duties
- Release of Information Authorization Form, if requested
- Field Instructor Training (CSUN offers a sixteen-hour training to be completed one time only and will accept attendance of a previously completed Field Instructor Training from an approved institution)

The Director of Field Education reviews this information in order to insure that all selected Field Instructors meet the selection requirements listed above. The geographic location of field placements encompasses the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, Antelope Valley, Los Angeles, and Ventura Counties. Placement sites are based on population served by agency, meeting CSWE Field Instructor qualifications, and various student needs. Field assignments are based on student interest, current skill level, background, etc., and are made by the Director of Field Education or Field Coordinator, utilizing information from the Field Liaison(s) and student. Each student is placed at two different agencies (private, non-profit, or public) during their two years of field education. The program places a strong emphasis on offering each student at least one placement experience different than their prior experiences and sometimes current interests. The purpose of this approach is to further expand upon strengths and maximize student learning in the CSUN MSW Program.

E. Generalist and Strengths Based Perspective

A generalist and strengths-based perspective are concepts covered extensively in all Foundation-year coursework. They provide the basic theoretical framework for the generalist practicum and seminar coursework. Students begin to demonstrate an ability to utilize critical thinking skills during the process of assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, termination, and follow-up practice. Also encompassed in this process is the utilization of multiple levels of

interventions such as: interviewing skills; support and empowerment; and advocacy for oppressed and at-risk populations.

F. Critical Thinking Skills

Students begin to demonstrate an ability to utilize critical thinking skills during the process of assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, termination, and follow-up practice. Encompassed in this process is the utilization of multiple levels of interventions such as interviewing skills, support and empowerment, and advocacy for oppressed and at-risk populations, when working with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations. Students are able to utilize research knowledge as it relates to various information collection and assessment data tools that assist in the development of effective and appropriate treatment plans and interventions, and to help them evaluate outcomes of interventions and their own practice. The merging of classroom content with the field practicum is achieved when the Field Instructor and student collaboratively focus attention on the actual application of skills via the material covered in the classroom.

G. Code of Ethics

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics is addressed and discussed in field seminar group discussions as part of vignette discussions, in practice scenarios, and in supervision in order to help the student combine course content with developing ethical practice skills (refer to the NASW Code of Ethics online at: <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>). In field practice and seminars, the student develops and demonstrates a basic understanding and commitment to social work values and ethics in their practice via gained self-awareness (identification of his/her own value system, biases, the ability to manage complexities involved with ethical dilemmas, including confidentiality, boundaries, and right-to-self-determination issues, etc.). The student also demonstrates beginning competence in this area, through professional commitment to the Code of Ethics and the standards of the social work profession regardless of client, agency, community, or one's own values and expectations. This is reflected in their attitudes, behaviors, communications, and practices.

II. FOUNDATION AND CONCENTRATION-YEAR FIELD REQUIREMENTS

A. Description of Courses

Field education is a core requirement of the MSW Program. Field education encompasses an integration of a service agency, a Field Instructor, and a University Representative (Field Liaison) all working together to help provide the student with the most well-rounded social work educational experience possible. The student is expected to demonstrate a progressive and incremental level of social work practice proficiency based on the Foundation and Concentration-year field goals and objectives. Therefore, the sequence of field education courses (SWRK 522, SWRK 523, SWRK 622A, SWRK 622B) must be taken concurrently with the social work practice courses.

Currently, each of the practicum courses is a three-unit credit course consisting of field internship and weekly field seminars. For three-year program students, the department may institute the field practicum course as either a one and one-half (1.5) or three (3) unit course upon approval from the University. The field courses, taught by the Field Liaison(s), are approximately one hour per week throughout the program. The student's field experiences, journals, and reading materials provide rich topics for group discussions.

B. Foundation-Year

The focus of the Foundation-year field practicum is to provide the students with generalist social work practice/hands-on skills. In the Foundation-year, students are placed in an identified social work agency which has met CSWE, CSUN, and MSW Program placement requirements. The assignment is based on faculty assessment of prior experience and entry-level learning needs. In order for the field staff to make the most appropriate field placement, students are asked to fill out a Foundation-year Field Application and attend a pre-placement field interview in the late Spring prior to the beginning of the program in the subsequent (Fall) semester.

The Foundation-year practicum requires that students spend sixteen hours per week at the same field site during the academic year. Schedules may vary depending on which cohort the student is in. All schedules must be approved by the Field Education Program. In addition to the field practicum placement, students participate in a field course that offers support, feedback, and input from peers regarding challenges, positive and negative situations, etc. occurring in their field settings (the specific schedule is determined at the beginning of each academic year).

In the first semester students initiate their assignments by becoming oriented to the agency placement. Students initially observe professionals in practice and later in the semester may begin to carry caseloads, case assignments, and participate in client, agency, and community activities. If students are assigned caseloads, they are expected to carry and manage them with the guidance of the Field Instructor. The Foundation-year placement focuses on generalist social work practice skills. The following are the specific Foundation-year field courses:

SWRK 522 Foundations of Field Practicum I (3 units)

SWRK 523 Foundations of Field Practicum II (3 units)

C. Concentration-Year

In the Concentration-year of field education, students continue to build upon the micro, mezzo and macro knowledge and skills gained during the Foundation-year, and through advanced coursework, continue to expand their application of new skills. Some of these advanced practice skills

consist of increased self-analysis and reflection, autonomy, constructive utilization of supervision, management of more complex case load assignments and legal and ethical issues.

In the Concentration-year of field, students have more input on their selection of a placement site. The focus of the Concentration-year field practicum is to provide the student with more advanced social work practice/hands-on skills. The focus of this Concentration-year encompasses helping the student develop more advanced interventions and strategies that will help them work more effectively with all populations. The following are the specific Concentration-year field courses:

SWRK 622A Advanced Field Practicum with Urban Families III (3 units)

SWRK 622B Advanced Field Practicum with Urban Families IV (3 units)

D. Assignments and Expectations for Foundation-Year Field

1. Field Placement Time Requirements

The student is required to complete at a minimum 400-600 hours during the Foundation-year of field education at one CSUN-approved field placement agency. Field days are usually Monday, Wednesday and/or Friday for two-year program students and a varied schedule for three-year program students.

2. Learning Agreement

The student, in conjunction with their Field Instructor, will need to complete a Learning Agreement at the beginning of the academic year. Learning Agreements are to be completed and turned in to the Field Liaison during the first month of field.

3. Supervision

Students are expected to participate in one hour of individual or group supervision with their Field Instructor during each week of field. It is recommended to set up a regular supervision time.

4. Student Field Evaluation

Field Instructors are to complete a mid-semester evaluation (approximately the 7th or 8th week of field) for both Fall and Spring semesters and again at the end of the Fall and Spring semesters.

5. Field Practicum Course

The practicum meets every week of each semester. Students are expected to attend all classes and assume an active role in class discussions and activities. Absences, tardiness, and early departures will impact the overall grade.

6. Journals

From the time the student begins field placement, students are expected to submit one, 1-3 page Field Journal Log to their Field Liaison for every week that they are in placement. Students may use field placement time to complete their Field Journal Logs, when possible. Journal entries should be reflective summaries of the previous week's field experience.

7. Educationally Based Recordings

Students are to submit one educationally based recording per week to their Field Instructor during the Foundation-year. The recordings are useful learning tools for both the student and Field Instructor. Because it is impossible for the Field Instructor to be with the student during every client contact, the recording helps the student keep the Field Instructor informed about their activities. The Field Instructor evaluates the student's assessment of the process, their use-of-self, ability to implement interventions, and overall ability to engage with the individual and/or group. The educationally based recordings enable the student to gradually gain better listening and content retention skills, reflect on their activities, explore the process issues that they were unaware of, analyze the methods they used to handle situations, and explore new learning and skills gained via the supervisory process. The recording also allows the student and Field Instructor to use these field experiences as the spring board of the supervisory hour. When writing a recording on a group, it should include the above identified information as well as the group dynamics between members, roles that members take on, and the group process.

8. Confidentiality

Information shared in the practicum about human service organizations and clients is covered by the NASW Code of Ethics and shared only in a classroom setting for supervisory purposes. Given the nature of the field seminar and the fact that it will focus on concerns and issues faced by students working with actual clients, it is critically important that client confidentiality be maintained. Under no circumstances should a student reveal the name of a client or provide descriptive information that might identify the client, even when names are not mentioned. Discussions outside the classroom regarding information about clients, Field Instructors, peers, or agencies are considered a Breach of Confidentiality and subject to consequences by the CSUN Social Work Department, NASW, and the individuals whose confidentiality was breached.

9. Channels of Communication

It is vital that students understand and practice appropriate communication skills when attempting to resolve issues with Field Instructors, peers, Field Liaisons, etc. Students need to identify ways of expressing their needs, concerns, or frustrations directly versus behaving unprofessionally (gossip, engaging in negative talk, aggressive or passive behaviors, etc.). Evaluations will also provide feedback regarding the level of integrity and professionalism students utilize when handling conflict or issues with clients, peers, agency staff, supervisor, Field Instructors, etc.

E. Concentration-Year Field Requirements

In order to reach Concentration-year field practicum status, students must have successfully completed the Foundation-year field practicum sequence, complete a Concentration-year Field Application, and must enroll in SWRK 622A and SWRK 622B. In the Concentration-year of field, students will continue to spend once a week in the field practicum class. The two-year program students will increase to three full work days per week of supervised field practice at their agency. Three-year program students maintain approximately sixteen hours per week of supervised field practice at their agency.

F. Assignments and Expectations for Concentration-Year Field

1. Preparation for Concentration-year Field

The Concentration-year field placement process includes the selection of a placement consistent with the student's area of specialization or area of interest. Concentration-year field placements are chosen from a group of agencies compiled by the field faculty and include on-site interviews. Process for placement in Concentration-year field work begins during the Spring semester of the Foundation-year.

2. Field Placement Time Requirements

The student is required to complete between 500 and 700 hours at one field placement agency (public, private, or non-profit agency) during the academic year. Field days are usually Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for two-year program students. The three-year program students schedule is varied. All field schedules must be approved by the Field Education Program. The specific field schedule is distributed and reviewed during the Mandatory Information Session at the beginning of the academic year.

3. Learning Contract

The student, in conjunction with their Field Instructor, will need to complete a Learning Agreement for the Concentration-year field placement. Learning Contracts are to be turned in to the Field Liaison during the first month of field.

4. Supervision

Students are expected to participate in one hour of individual or group supervision with their Field Instructor during each week of field. It is recommended to set up a regular supervision time.

5. Student Field Evaluation

Field Instructors are to complete a mid-semester evaluation (approximately the 7th or 8th week of field) for both Fall and Spring semester and again at the end of the Fall and Spring semesters.

6. Field Practicum Course

The practicum will meet every week of each semester. Students are expected to attend all classes and assume an active role in class discussions and activities. Absences, tardiness, and early departures will impact the overall grade.

7. Journals

From the time the student begins field placement, students are expected to submit one, 1-3 page Field Journal Log to their Field Liaison for every week that they are in placement. Students can use field placement time to complete their Field Journal Logs when possible. Journal entries should be reflective summaries about the previous week's field experience.

8. Educationally Based Recordings

Students are to submit one educationally based recording per week to their Field Instructor during the Concentration-year. The recordings are useful learning tools for both the student and Field Instructor. Because it is impossible for the Field Instructor to be with the student during every client contact, the recording helps the student keep the Field Instructor informed about their activities. The Field Instructor evaluates the student's assessment of the process, their use-of-self, their ability to implement interventions, and overall ability to engage with the individual and/or group. The educationally based recordings enable the student to gradually gain better listening and content retention skills, reflect on their activities, explore the process issues that they were unaware of, analyze the methods they used to handle situations, and explore new learning and skills gained via the supervisory process. The recording also allows the student and Field Instructor to use these field experiences as the spring board of the supervisory hour. When writing a recording on a group, it should include the above identified information as well as the group dynamics between members, roles that members take on, and the group process.

9. Confidentiality

Information shared in the practicum about human service organizations and clients is covered by the NASW Code of Ethics and shared only in a classroom setting for supervisory purposes. Given the nature of the field seminar and the fact that it will focus on concerns and issues faced by students working with actual clients, it is critically important that client confidentiality be maintained. Under no circumstances should a student reveal the name of a client or provide descriptive information that might identify the client, even when names are not mentioned. Discussions outside the classroom regarding information about clients, Field Instructors, peers or agencies are considered a Breach of Confidentiality and subject to consequences by the CSUN Social Work Department, NASW, and the individuals whose confidentiality was breached.

10. Channels of Communication

It is vital that students understand and practice appropriate communication skills when attempting to resolve issues with clients, Field Instructors, peers, agency staff, supervisors, Field Liaisons, etc. Students need to identify ways of expressing their needs, concerns, or frustrations directly versus behaving unprofessionally (gossip, engaging in negative talk, aggressive or passive behaviors, etc.). Evaluations will also provide feedback regarding the level of integrity and professionalism students utilize when handling conflict or issues.

G. Field Education Grading Policy

Students receive one combined grade for their field practicum and field course work. The field education course requires that the student earns a grade of "B-" or above in order to continue in the CSUN MSW Program. The determination of the grade for the field practicum and seminar is made by the Field Liaison with input from the Field Instructor, and is based on the following:

- Student performance at their placement agency as reflected, in part, by the outcome of the one or more Student Evaluations;
- Student's participation, attendance, and punctuality in the field course and field practicum;
- Student's completion of field practicum course and field placement assignments (quality and timeliness);

- Student's ability to work through and resolve conflicts with peers, supervisors, agency staff, clients, Field Instructors, etc.;
- Status of any active Performance Enhancement Contracts; and,
- Student's professional behavior as evaluated by adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics.

H. Failure to Perform Satisfactorily

If a student is given a "C+" or "C" grade, the student may not advance to the next semester of the Field Education Program without permission from the Director of Field Education. If the "C+" or "C" grade is given to the student in last semester of the MSW Program, the student may not advance to graduation without permission from the Director of Field Education. If the Director of Field Education does not advance the student to the next semester of field (or to graduation if the "C+" or "C" grade is given the final semester of field) the student will be referred to the Academic Review Committee for consideration (see Academic Review Committee in the Student Handbook). If the student receives a "C-" or lower grade in field, the student will be dismissed from the MSW Program (refer to the Academic Standards section of the Student Handbook).

If a student obtains an "Incomplete" grade in field they will need to complete all unfinished work prior to the beginning of the following semester, otherwise they will receive a failing grade for the field practicum course. The field practicum is a graded course and if a student fails to perform, their grade will be impacted accordingly. In addition, due to the fact that each semester's field practicum course is built upon the previous semester's field coursework, the student would not be allowed to continue to the next sequence of coursework until the course/area of deficiency has been corrected. The conditions by which the removal of the "Incomplete" grade would occur must be put in writing, signed by those involved, and a copy of the contract would go in the student's file.

If it is behavior that resulted in the student receiving an "Incomplete" and that behavior is judged by the field faculty and the Director of Field Education to be of such a nature that placing the student on an educationally-directed field placement would not help or cause change in the behavior, the student will not be allowed to repeat the field course or attempt to correct the "Incomplete" grade. Generally, unchangeable behaviors that negatively impact field placement stem from an individual's inability to set and maintain personal and/or professional boundaries, an inability to allow for client self-determination, displaying intolerance and/or judgment of clients, poor communication skills, and other behaviors that go against core social work values (please refer to: VI. of this manual).

III. EVALUATION

Evaluation of all program areas are conducted at various points throughout the academic year and with a variety of evaluation tools.

A. Mid-Semester Student Progress Report

This report is written each semester by the Field Instructor and submitted to the MSW Field Education Program. Contents of the report may or may not be reviewed with the student directly. The progress report provides the Field Liaison with an update of the student's current progress, identifies any concerns or issues that need to be addressed, and identifies current areas of work, strength, and need for the remainder of the semester.

B. End of Semester Student Evaluation

This evaluation is written at the end of each semester by the Field Instructor, and reviewed by the student and Field Liaison. The evaluation assesses the student's progress in each of the areas identified in the Learning Agreement, and as such, the student earns a specific evaluation result per area.

C. Evaluation of Field Liaison by Student and Field Instructor

This evaluation process is conducted at the end of every academic year. The evaluations provide the Director of Field Education with varied perspectives of the Field Liaison, evaluating the assistance and support provided to the above noted individuals, as well as the Field Liaison's areas of strength and areas for needed improvement.

D. Student and Field Liaison Evaluation of the Agency Site and the Field Instructor

This area of evaluation provides the student and Field Liaison an opportunity to evaluate the agency site and Field Instructor, and provide feedback related to areas of strength and challenge.

IV. GENERAL INFORMATION FOR MSW FIELD EDUCATION

A. Identification as a MSW Student Intern

Often clients, staff, or community personnel assume that the credentials of all the staff who work at the same site are the same, therefore, not identifying oneself as a student would result in a misrepresentation of credentials. All students are required to represent themselves to clients, staff, and community professionals as a “student intern”.

B. Student Privacy/Confidentiality Waiver

All information related to the student placement and performance in an agency is neither private nor confidential, even if the student is in an employment-based practicum setting. Field Instructors are considered adjunct faculty and thereby entitled to receive and share with the CSUN MSW Program faculty information pertinent to the student’s educational process.

C. Student Responsibilities

- Obtain professional liability insurance coverage. The student must provide proof of coverage prior to beginning their field education. Professional liability insurance must have a minimum coverage of \$1,000,000/\$1,000,000 because students are not covered by the general liability policy at CSUN. Students may use any carrier they choose, provided they meet the minimum coverage and provided that they can show proof of coverage prior to beginning of each field placement. Students are to contact the department to confirm the date this needs to be submitted by.
- Complete all required prerequisites by the University, Department of Social Work, and agency prior to commencing field (fingerprinting/criminal background checks, TB test and written verification of test status and clearance if test is positive, current Immunization Record, etc.). CSUN MSW Field Education Program makes every effort to have agencies incur the costs of above requirements; however, in some situations the student may need to pay for certain items.
- The CSUN Department of Social Work expects students with prior felony convictions to inform the Director of Field Education of such convictions prior to commencement of the field process. A question regarding all felony and misdemeanor convictions appears on the MSW Program Application and Field Education Application. Individuals with felony convictions may not be allowed to work with children or be placed in certain agencies or situations. Students misrepresenting information on the MSW Program and/or Field Education Application will be administratively dropped from the MSW Program.
- Students are representatives of the agency and are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner as well as adhere to the policies and regulations of the agency, just as an employee is expected to do, including dress code and agency hours.
- Students are required to remain in their field placements for the duration of the academic year.
- Students must demonstrate professionalism (e.g., avoid engaging in gossip or negative talk), appropriate behavior (e.g., not unprofessional, avoidant, or aggressive behavior), and use chain of authority when dealing with conflict. The student will be evaluated on their ability to communicate with others.
- Abide by the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Notify their Field Instructor if they are going to be absent (planned or unplanned) and discuss how they will make up the work and hours. Significant changes in schedule require approval

from the Field Education Program. *NOTE*. If there is an issue of absences or chronic absenteeism the issue needs to be addressed with the Field Liaison and the Field Instructor. If the absenteeism is found to be disruptive to the field experience and/or clients, an evaluation as to whether the student should continue or be terminated from the field placement will be addressed. Any deviation from originally approved schedule must be approved by the Field Instructor, the Field Liaison, and in some cases, the Director of Field Education. Students may not end their placement or change placements without the prior approval of the Director of Field Education.

- Develop a Learning Agreement in collaboration with the Field Instructor at the beginning of the field practicum.
- Complete and participate in all scheduled evaluations.
- Students should not perform duties outside of their scope of practice.

D. Employment-Based Internships or Job Conversions

In rare instances, a student is granted approval for utilizing their employment as a field site. A Memorandum of Understanding is used for this purpose to outline the parameters. The agreement must be signed by the Agency Director, the Field Instructor's supervisor, the Field Instructor (who must be someone who is not the employment supervisor), the student/employee, the Director of Field Education, and the Field Liaison. If the job conversion is approved, there is a clear understanding that:

- The duties that the individual performs during their employment hours are very different than their duties as an intern;
- The supervision is provided by two separate individuals; and
- The student/employee schedule is set so blocks of time for field education are provided for (such as two or three full days to perform only student tasks).

E. Paid or Stipend Field Placements

Paid or stipend field placements are greatly appreciated by the students and CSUN but the majority of field placements are not paid or stipend. It is important that expectations related to a student's productivity not be evaluated as that of an employee. Even when students are being paid or given a stipend, their role in the agency is not of an employee, but of a student intern. The student's assignments must be educationally focused. Information on CalSWEC and IUC stipend programs will be made available to all students. Additional private stipends may be available depending on funding and the individual needs of the agency.

V. STUDENT PLACEMENT PROCESS

The placement of a student in a field practicum site involves an evaluation and assessment regarding the student's educational experiences, their work experiences, and career goals. This information helps in narrowing and selecting the most appropriate field placement sites for the student.

Placement decisions are made by the Director of Field Education and/or the Field Coordinator after considering educational needs, student preferences, agency capacity, and input from Field Liaison and Field Instructor. Not all student requests can be met, but every reasonable effort will be made to consider their requests. Placement assignments are for an entire academic year and placements generally begin in the Fall semester and continue through the end of the Spring semester for two-year program students. Schedules for three-year program students begin in the Fall semester of the second year and continue until the conclusion of Spring semester in the third year. Students may not pursue their own field placements and should not contact an agency prior to referrals made by the Director of Field Education.

A. General Steps for Securing a Field Placement

- Student completes the Foundation-year/Concentration-year Field Application and submits it to the Director of Field Education. Failure to submit a completed application by the deadline may jeopardize the student's ability to participate in field practicum for the following academic year.
- Student attends the Field Consultation Meeting to discuss prior and current work experiences as well as the overall field practicum process.
- The Director of Field Education and Field Coordinator contact agencies in order to confirm placement slots for the following academic year.
- For Foundation-year students, the Director of Field Education and/or Field Coordinator informs incoming students of practicum sites and instructs students to set up meetings with Field Instructors.
- During the Concentration-year only, the student receives referral(s) and sets up an interview directly with the agencies. The student will be given three agency referrals/interview opportunities. The CSUN MSW Program does not guarantee that all students will be successful in the placement interview process or that going on an interview will result in a guaranteed placement.
- The student will prepare, at minimum, a one page resume for their interview(s). A specific form is provided for Concentration-year students.
- The agency Field Instructor will give verbal or written feedback to the Director of Field Education or Field Coordinator as to whether a student will be accepted or not by their particular agency for placement.
- The Director of Field Education or Field Coordinator makes the final decision of placement and informs student.
- The student attends all required orientations and meetings.
- The Field Instructor and Site Field Preceptor attend the Field Instructor Orientation and Training (if applicable).

VI. PLACEMENT FAILURE, GRIEVANCES, PROBLEM RESOLUTION, AND TERMINATION OF FIELD STUDENTS

A. Placement Failure

During both the Foundation and Concentration years of field, students who either do not want to be placed at any of the agencies that they are assigned to, have been denied a placement by three different agencies, or a combination thereof, will meet with the Director of Field Education and the Chair/Director. The possible outcome of a placement failure could result in:

- Student will be advised to sit out the year due to personal life complications that seemingly interfere with the student's ability to present well in interviews or perform the work of a social worker, and referred to appropriate community resources.
- Student will be advised that social work is not an appropriate profession for them and will be offered career counseling through the University Career Center, and/or referred to the University Counseling Services for personal counseling.
- Student will be advised to extend their academic program another full year and pursue both their academic and placement the following academic year. In the interim they will be advised to volunteer at a human service agency to gain more experience and understanding of the social work profession.

B. Grievances Regarding Field Practicum

The student has the right to express disagreement or displeasure related to placement site, Field Instructor, or their Student Evaluation. As is previously stated (see Section IV. a. Student Responsibilities) the student should first discuss any grievance(s) with the individual with whom they have a disagreement with. If this method does not resolve the matter, then they should proceed through the administrative chain.

The CSUN MSW Program will not automatically change the student's field placement unless it is clear that the practicum is not providing a good learning experience or if there is evidence that the student is somehow being mistreated or discriminated against. The student must first provide written documentation indicating the steps that they have taken and the administrative channels they have utilized in order to resolve the matter.

C. General Field Problem Resolution Process

When issues involving conflict or other types of issues occur in the placement setting, all parties are encouraged to try and resolve the matter at the lowest level of authority prior to elevating the matter. If one or both parties feels that they have tried to resolve the matter but there still is not resolution, then the Field Liaison and the Field Instructor (if they are not one of the two original parties in the conflict) should be involved. A meeting should be set up between the Field Instructor, Field Liaison, and student in order to address the current problem.

D. Field Problems as a Result of Student Performance Issues

Problems relating to student performance include not achieving academic expectations or violation(s) of the NASW Code of Ethics. If the problem is not resolved within a reasonable period of time, the Field Instructor will notify the Field Liaison of the ongoing issue(s) and write a summary addressing the ongoing issue(s), what progress and/or lack of progress the student has made, and the different dates and times that the Field Instructor has met with the student in order to assess progress

and status of issues. At this point, another meeting can occur between the three parties or the Field Liaison, and if appropriate the Field Coordinator and/or the Director of Field Education would meet with the student to discuss the issues(s) and make a determination as to what action should be taken at that time. A Performance Enhancement Contract (see below) may be utilized at this time. Situations such as these should be reflected in the student's semester evaluation and they should reflect the growth and ongoing challenge the student had in placement.

If the Field Instructor identifies that the student's behavior(s) places the clients, agency, or themselves in a dangerous position or violates agency policies, the Field Instructor has the right to dismiss the student and notify the student that they are terminating their field placement due to the identified violation(s). The Field Instructor must notify the Field Liaison and Director of Field Education immediately.

E. Performance Enhancement Contract

A Performance Enhancement Contract should be written by the Field Instructor or Field Liaison and forwarded to the Director of Field Education with a copy to the Chair of the Department. The contract should include: a) specific behaviors or duties that need to be improved upon; b) how the progress or lack of progress will be monitored and evaluated; and c) the date(s) by which the objectives identified must be accomplished by. *NOTE:* The student should be aware that they will not be allowed to change their placement but will have to stay at their current placement and attempt to resolve the issues that exist there for them.

If the student's performance does not improve or does not improve to a level where the Field Instructor or agency deems appropriate, an evaluation will be made by the Field Liaison and the Director of Field Education as to whether the student should be removed from the agency. If the performance problem is more pervasive and has implications greater than field, the Field Education Program will refer the matter to the Academic Review Committee.

F. Field Performance Problems Due to Student Personal Issues

If the field problem is a result of personal problems/conflict/challenges that the student is experiencing (i.e., crisis, illness, death in the family, etc.), it is expected that the student will keep the Field Instructor and Field Liaison apprised of the situation on an ongoing basis. All parties involved should follow the General Field Problem Resolution Process guidelines found in section VI of this manual. If these personal problems continue, or negatively impact the clients, agency, or student's ability to meet their social work field obligations/expectations due to absences and/or their ability to competently perform social work functions, then the student will be removed from placement.

If a student decides to officially withdraw academically or is unable to complete the semester at the same agency they were at, they will be required to reapply to the MSW Program. In certain circumstances, the student may request a leave of absence from the Chair of the department. For students returning after a leave of absence, a new field placement will need to be secured for the student. Students may need to repeat field hours regardless of how many field hours the student previously completed.

G. Field Performance Problems Due to Agency Deficiencies

If the student's performance problems are due to deficits in the placement agency's practices (i.e., lack of or poor quality supervision, personality problems negatively affecting learning, etc.), violations of the NASW Code of Ethics (i.e., harassment or discrimination, placing student in dangerous situations, etc.), or due to major agency changes that would greatly impact the student's learning, the process for attempting to resolve this type of issue would follow the same procedure as

under the General Field Problem Resolution Process found in section VI of this manual. If there is no solution that supports the educational objectives of the student and University, then the Field Liaison will discuss the matter with the Director of Field Education. If the consensus is that it is not in the best educational interest of the student to continue at that field placement site, then the student will be removed from that agency and placed at a different agency.

H. Failure to Meet Academic Requirements

If the student does not successfully fulfill the field requirements, the student grade will be negatively impacted. Please refer to Field Education Grading Policy.

I. Termination of Field Placement

Students are required to remain in the same field placement for the entire academic year. Yet, a field placement may be terminated if:

- The student has violated the NASW Code of Ethics.
- The agency has failed to provide an appropriate learning experience, appropriate and qualified supervisor, or has not insured a safe and healthy placement for the student.
- The student fails to meet expected performance standards including an ongoing lack of professionalism by the student at either the field placement site, field practicum course, or both (i.e., poor boundaries, tardiness, absenteeism, missing appointments, inappropriate and/or unprofessional conduct, communicating in an inappropriate or rude manner, turning in assignments late, marginal or below marginal assignments, etc.).
- A life event or major change which results in the failure to meet the learning objectives, and is not as a result of negative circumstances brought on by either party (i.e., funding cuts, unable to provide supervisor, etc.).
- If the student realized that social work is not the right profession for them.

VIII. SAFETY GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS

In an effort to improve student safety and help the student increase skills and knowledge about how to more appropriately and effectively handle situations, it is very important for students to gain information regarding the policies, procedures, and expectations that the University, agency, and Field Instructors have related to safety issues.

A. The MSW Program Safety Policy

Due to the nature of the work students are involved in, issues related to safety, role-playing scenarios, discussions related to safety incidents, etc. will be an ongoing topic during the Field Education Program. The purpose of these discussions will be to give the student different perspectives on situations and different ways to approach them, increasing the likelihood that the student will be able to stay safe and more effectively handle even volatile situations. The CSUN MSW Program also expects that agencies will provide their student a safe place (preferably with a lock) where the student can keep their personal belongings.

B. Policy and Procedures if an Incident Occurs at the Field Site

If an incident involving a physical or psychological injury to a student occurs, the Field Instructor or an agency representative should contact the Director of Field Education immediately. A discussion would need to occur regarding the incident, what the current status of the situation is, and what the desired outcomes are of the agency, Field Instructor, and student. Both the Field Instructor and Field Liaison will need to document the incident and plan. The Field Liaison will contact the student and assess the student's safety and mental wellbeing, as well as determine if and when the student can return to their placement or if they need to be removed from that placement and be relocated elsewhere.