

## **BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK (B.S.W.)**

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## **BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK (B.S.W.)**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE B.S.W. PROGRAM**

The undergraduate program of social work education has been in existence for over fifty years at Western Michigan University. It was first introduced as a single course in the sociology department. Course offerings increased in response to student interest, ultimately achieving capability for provision of a minor in combination with majors in sociology, sociology-anthropology, or social science.

With the advent of the graduate social work program, the School of Social Work was added to the College of Health and Human Services at the University, and the undergraduate program became a part of the School of Social Work. In response to the interests and needs of the students and the practice community, a bachelor's degree in social work was offered beginning with the academic year 1972-1973.

The social work undergraduate curriculum is designed to:

- Prepare students for generalist professional social work practice
- Offer preparation for graduate education in social work
- Provide social welfare training as part of liberal arts education
- Encourage faculty research, scholarship, and community service
- Convey and act upon a commitment to social justice to enhance the equity and equality for all members of society

The goal is to help students acquire beginning knowledge and abilities for social work practice at the baccalaureate level. Undergraduate social work courses focus on:

- Human behavior and social interaction
- The historical and philosophical base of social welfare and social work
- Social welfare institutions
- The social work profession
- Social work practice skills
- Field experiences in community social agencies.

Students with a major in other areas may elect a minor in social work. However, the field placement is not an option for these students.

### **B.S.W. PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT**

The undergraduate social work curriculum prepares students for generalist social work practice by emphasizing a conceptual framework of systems theory, the ecological model, and the strengths-based approach to problem solving. Generalist social workers address a range of social issues and work within a variety of practice settings facilitating positive change to enhance the social functioning of individuals, groups, families, organizations, and communities.

The B.S.W. program strives for a personalized approach to instruction that engages the student in a learning process that promotes critical thinking and self-reflection in order to

develop knowledge and skills in the areas of human behavior and the social environment, social work practice, research, social policy and field practice.

The program is committed to encouraging and educating students to work towards the creation of a more just and humane society by advocating for needed services and resources for oppressed and vulnerable populations.

### B.S.W. PROGRAM GOALS

- To prepare students for competent, compassionate, and ethical generalist social work appropriate to a wide range of fields of practice and with clients systems of various configurations and characteristics
- To facilitate the student's capacity for self-awareness, reflection, and critical thinking
- To assure that our students internalize the social work tradition of advocating on behalf of oppressed and vulnerable people and to provide them with the necessary skills and abilities to effectively work for social justice
- To assure that B.S.W. students develop a respect and appreciation for diversity of people as well as ideas
- To expect and encourage a commitment to further professional development and life long learning.

### B.S.W. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Upon graduation from the undergraduate program in the School of Social Work, students will be able to:

- Conduct reflective practice, develop and articulate reasons for practice decisions, and generate alternative intervention strategies as needed
- Practice within the values and ethics of the social work profession and with an understanding of and respect for the positive value of diversity
- Demonstrate an awareness of how personal feelings, thoughts, attitudes, values, and experiences influence practice
- Maintain the mutuality of worker-client system and demonstrate a willingness to explore, learn, and grow through interactions with client systems
- Assess the psychosocial impact of oppression and discrimination, and empower clients by mobilizing and enhancing their strengths and resources to resolve problems and reduce oppression
- Understand the histories of social welfare and the profession of social work and appreciate the profession's unique commitment to social justice
- Apply the principles and techniques of generalist social work practice in intervening with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Use a theoretical framework to understand the interactions among individuals and between individuals and social systems (i.e., families, groups, organizations, and communities)
- Apply knowledge of bio-psycho-social variables to interpret human growth, development and behavior relative to the broader environmental context; this is understood to encompass social, cultural, historical, political, and economic forces.

- Analyze the impact of social policies on client systems, workers, and agencies, and engage in intervention strategies that facilitate socially just policies and practices within human service systems and the larger community
- Seek out, critically consider, integrate, and apply relevant professional literature to practice
- Evaluate the effectiveness of professional practice through reflection, consultation, supervision, and the application of formal models of practice evaluation
- Recognize and appropriately respond to the unique characteristics, strengths, and dynamics of diverse populations and client systems
- Communicate effectively with colleagues and members of the community to build networks and engage in collaborative processes for decision-making
- Demonstrate a commitment to professional development by seeking out and using consultation and supervision, through participating in professional associations, and by keeping abreast of professional literature
- Assess organizational structure (formal and informal) and function effectively within the parameters, strengths, and constraints of the agency
- Evaluate organizational and/or program effectiveness and advocate for improvements in order to enhance service delivery and client functioning.

### THE FIELD PLACEMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Field education strives to address and create opportunities for students to develop a working knowledge of the social work profession while integrating values and skills. Through the field placement, the student is given the opportunity to test out skills and theories taught in the classroom. Differing from the classroom, however, the learning is more directive, immediate, and personal. It is an active process with emphasis on participation. The opportunity is provided for the student to deepen, extend and apply foundation knowledge. The field placement should provide opportunities for the student to assume responsibility for productive tasks within the agency, to observe, identify, and shadow social work role models in various professional roles in the agency and community, to assess his/her interest in and suitability for a career in social work, and to develop his/her direct practice skills and knowledge of community resources.

Western Michigan University School of Social Work **policy indicates that students who are not offered a placement after three agency interviews for reasons related to their appropriateness or readiness for and internship will be referred to the Professional Review Committee (PRC) for evaluation and problem solving.** This could result in a recommendation that the student be terminated from the School of Social Work program.

### THE FIELD PLACEMENT

#### Field Courses

The field placement courses, Field Experience and Seminar I (Social Work 4100) and Field Experience and Seminar II (Social Work 4110) are taken concurrently with the practice courses Social Work Practice: Intervention and Evaluation (Social Work 4010) and Social Work Practice: Policy Analysis and Organizational Context (Social Work 4020). Students receive four (4) credits for each field course. All field courses are graded credit/no credit.

### Field Hours

Students begin field placement in the senior year with the option of a two-semester experience fall/spring semesters or spring semester/summer I session. Fall/spring field placements require approximately a 16-hour per work week commitment, the spring/summer I require approximately a 16 and 29-hour work week commitment respectively of fieldwork.

**Students are to complete approximately 200 field education hours per semester or session for a total of a minimum of 400 hours for the academic calendar. Field labs and field seminar hours do not count towards required field hours.**

Overall the student must log approximately 16 (or 29 depending on the semester/session enrolled in) hours per week to allow for a full range of learning experiences, over time, which should go until the end of the semester/session. It is important for these learning experiences to build over the course of each semester. Students are encouraged to log a few additional hours to cover an unexpected absence or an illness, but the bulk of the required hours must be logged continuously and contiguously over the course of the semester(s). Students at times may also be required to attend their field placements during the University breaks for a few hours so that client relationships are maintained. This is decided between the student and their field instructor.

Fieldwork time is monitored by the faculty liaison through the use of time logs, etc., and contact with the field instructor.

### The Learning Contract

The following objectives should be reviewed and incorporated into all students learning contracts and are designed to help students:

- Integrate and apply theory, knowledge, and skills derived from the professional foundation courses, the liberal arts, and the interdisciplinary minor to social work practice
- Develop awareness of their individual skills, values, and areas for further growth
- Apply social work values and ethics to practice
- Develop sensitivity to the special needs of women, minorities, and other disadvantaged groups
- Apply the problem-solving framework to social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Use supervision effectively
- Evaluate individual interventions as well as agency services
- Develop an understanding of the organization of health and human services in a community in terms of their functions and the community forces which affect service delivery
- Become aware of issues regarding safety in the field placement.

The learning contract template can be found in Appendix N.

### Field Laboratories

The field laboratory classroom meetings are scheduled during the first two weeks of the semester or session (Social Work 4100) for three six-hour meetings prior to the students' entry into the field placement. Students meet on campus with the faculty liaison to prepare for field placement. The focus of these three labs is to introduce and increase socialization to the profession, to review and practice basic social work skills, to begin formation of group cohesiveness and to initiate peer group support. The field lab also includes a beginning and basic introduction to safety issues in the field, which includes awareness, assessment, and interventions in potentially violent situations. The preparation is didactic as well as experiential. Refer to the chapter in this manual on *Student Safety in the Field Placement*. **Students are required to attend all scheduled laboratories before starting field placement.**

Field laboratory topics include:

#### Required Topics

- Introduction to field education including program expectations, role clarification, and professionalism
- The learning contract
- Safety preparation
- Mandatory reporting, child protective services, adult protective services, and duty to warn

#### Suggested Topics

- Ethics in practice
- Engagement, assessment, interviewing
- Professional boundary development/dual relationships
- Stress management and time management
- Professional terminology and documentation
- Group facilitation

#### Suggested Assignments

- Introductory icebreaker assignment
- "Asking for help" exercise
- Role-plays to develop communication, interview, and assessment skills
- Interviews with individual students to determine perspective on entering field placement

### The Field Seminars

All fall and spring placements require a bi-weekly seminar. Spring and Summer I require a bi-weekly seminar switching to a weekly seminar in Summer I session.

The goal of the field seminar is to provide a place for students to integrate classroom information with field experiences (see suggested topics below), engage in group problem-solving practice, and seek and provide peer support. Social Work 4100 includes 12 hours of on-campus seminar time and Social Work 4110 includes 14 hours of seminar. Seminars are scheduled by the School of Social Work and facilitated by the faculty liaison.

Each seminar will provide time for individual students to present experiences from their field placement, to articulate problems and concerns, and to receive peer feedback and support. Students also have written and oral assignments, which relate to the use of practice theory in their fieldwork and are turned in to their faculty liaison. **Students are required to attend all scheduled seminars.**

#### Suggested Topics

- Self-assessment skills
- Ethics and values in practice
- Professional boundaries
- Advocacy
- Community resources and relationship building
- Diversity

Rather than actually teaching about these topics in the seminar, the faculty liaison facilitates discussion among the students about actual experiences they have had in the field placement involving the topic at hand. For example, students would come to a seminar session with the knowledge that the focus would be on development of professional boundaries. Students may present a learning experience in which they were directly involved that challenged them or relate an incident in which they observed someone who made good use of professional boundaries or failed to do so.

#### Suggested Assignments

- Taking on the role of the client
- Defining and describing agency services
- Developing a learning contract
- Daily field logs
- Case presentation
- Resume and cover letter
- Field education “self-rating” scale (found in the field application) comparison exercise
- Self-reflection summary
- Final course folio

The main purpose of any assignment related to field is to enhance student learning and assist in the development of professional competence. B.S.W. Social Work 4100 and Social Work 4110 suggested assignments can be found in Appendix O.

### FIELD PLACEMENT LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Students entering their field placement possess different needs, backgrounds, and varying degrees of skill. Some are experienced in the areas of social welfare practice, others have had first hand experience in the area of social problems, and some have limited knowledge apart from what they have learned in the classroom. Therefore, it is important for students to have the opportunity to work with individuals, with small groups, and with the community in general. Furthermore, the experience is to be an active one and not mainly observation. The following are suggested areas of participation and the field instructor should feel free to function creatively in developing other educational experiences.

- Having ongoing, direct service responsibility for individual clients or groups
- Reading records to become familiar with the work of the agency, its mission, and policies
- Learning agency policies, procedures, forms, and documentation requirement, etc.
- Contacting other agencies used in the referral network to learn about their services
- Visit and network with other agencies to better understand their function and their role in the human service community
- Participating in client intake, assessment, evaluation, planning, and intervention process
- Attending board, staff, team, and administrative meetings
- Leading or co-leading groups
- Actively participating in the supervision process
- Observing any community-based function that relates to the agency such as a court hearing, city council, or board of education, when they pertain to the agency