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FIELD PLACEMENT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

The field placement experience offers students an opportunity for learning about social problems, social welfare, organizations, diverse client groups, communities and resources, and issues that are psychosocial in nature. This occurs in an agency-based setting under the direct supervision of an approved and credentialed social work field instructor. The field placement is an opportunity for students to add breadth and depth to their previous experience and also a time to explore a new area or field of study. The field placement is an integral part of the B.S.W. and M.S.W. programs and has strict standards from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) that must be met. **The School of Social Work does not grant credit for current or past work experience or life experience.** (see EPAS standard 5.2).

THE FIELD APPLICATION PROCESS

B.S.W. students typically complete the required 400-hour field placement their senior year during the fall/spring or spring/summer I semesters concurrent with required course work and only after having met the prerequisites. M.S.W. students are required to complete two field placements (900 hours total) during the fall and spring semesters concurrent with required course work and only after having met prerequisites. *The M.S.W. field placements are to be completed in consecutive years.*

All students are required to complete an application for field placement, which is submitted to the Office of Field Education. The coordinator of field education is responsible for implementing the placement plan. The field application is very detailed and is utilized by the agency field instructor when interviewing the student during the placement process. The application includes a skills check list, a liability statement, narrative questions (that must be typed), and a resume. **If the field application is not submitted in its entirety by the identified deadline, the student will not be assigned to an agency until the students who did meet the deadline are assigned and have completed their interviews.** The coordinator of field education will review each element of the application. Students will be asked to complete a form that identifies a list of agencies where they are interested in completing their field placement. An agency database is available on-line for students' searches. Students are encouraged to research agencies utilizing this on-line database so they can make informed selections on their list of preferred agencies. This research will also provide information to prepare students for an agency interview. Students are also always welcome to meet with the field coordinator to discuss the possibilities for field placements or other concerns that they may have about field issues. The coordinator of field education will make every attempt to match each student to one of their three preferred agencies for placement. Students will be informed of their placement in early April for most students. BSW students who are to begin their placements in January will be informed of their placements by mid-November. Students will be responsible for contacting the identified agency and scheduling an interview with the potential field instructor. The interview process allows the students to practice job interviewing, to meet and be evaluated by a potential field instructor, to learn about the agency expectations, and become familiar with the functions of the agency. It also gives the field instructor the opportunity to determine if the student would meet the needs and standards of the agency. If the

agency representative and the student do not believe that the placement would be a good “fit”, the student will be required to discuss with the field coordinator the reasons that the first placement was not workable. Another agency with an opening for a student placement will be identified by the field coordinator.

Students are **not** to contact field placement agencies independently and all students must successfully interview and be selected for placement by the agency field instructor. 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 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.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND THE SHARING OF STUDENT INFORMATION DURING THE PLACEMENT PROCESS

The Office of Field Education may share all relevant information with appropriate persons who may include the faculty liaison, the agency field instructor, the student’s academic advisor, or the director of the School of Social Work. Relevant information is defined as information that may have an impact on the field placement selection and information which may affect clients, agency field instructors, staff, or the student learning experience. Such information will be shared to enable informed choice by field instructors, protect clients, protect students, and facilitate the learning process. Agency field instructors are also expected to share relevant information with the Office of Field Education. The student may be required to sign a release of information for some types of information. M.S.W. foundation sequence students agree to have a copy of their final semester field evaluation sent to their concentration field instructor prior to the start of the semester. This evaluation will be used to “jump-start” the student’s learning contract.

THE EXTENDED-STUDY STUDENT

Extended-study students who are employed particularly need to be aware that they should be able to commit an average of 16 hours per work week to their field placement in the second and third year of their program. Completing both the field placements is a huge commitment and needs upfront planning by the student and his/her employer. This means that students need to start working with their employers early on to develop a plan to change their work schedule by either dropping the number of hours they will work during the week or utilizing vacation time so that the field hours can be accomplished during the work week. Without the ability to work this out with an employer, it is basically impossible for an extended-study student to complete the M.S.W. program. It is very rare to find a field placement agency that is able to provide learning opportunities and social work supervision for a student in the evenings and on the weekends.

THE WORK-STUDY OPTION

Students who are employed in a social work setting are encouraged to explore the work-study option for one of their required field placements. Work-study proposal guidelines are available in Appendix K of the Field Manual. Students who are already working in an agency can submit a proposal to complete **one** required field placement in their agency

in a different department with a different client population and with a different person other than their supervisor functioning as their field instructor. Field instructors in a work-study placement must meet the same degree and work experience requirements as all field instructors. Arrangements for any wages received by the student for the 16 hours of field education per week are strictly between the student and the employer.

STUDENT REIMBURSEMENT

While agencies are not required to financially compensate students for field placement, the Office of Field Education encourages agencies to provide funds to students when possible. Such arrangements are strictly based upon negotiations between the agency and the student. If agency staff is reimbursed for travel, it is encouraged that the student will benefit from the same agency policies.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Bachelor and master students may pursue different specializations and certifications in addition to their regular curriculum. All students are responsible for making application to the specific programs and completing all program requirements. Some of the certificates require a field placement experience that is concurrent and that can be coordinated with the required social work field placement. Students should indicate on their field application if they are pursuing an additional certificate or credential. Basic information on the certificates is listed below.

School Social Work

The school social work certification program assists MSW students in meeting the criteria for certification as a school social worker in the State of Michigan. The criteria for certification is established by the State of Michigan Board of Education (not the University) and includes a master of social work degree and successful completion (a "B" or better) in the following additional courses: Social Services in the Schools (Social Work 5660), Diagnostic Tests and Measures (Counseling Education Counseling Psychology 6030), and Education of Children With Special Needs (Special Education 5300). In addition, the state requires that the student successfully complete a 500-hour field placement working primarily with children and families addressing their educational needs under the supervision of a certified school social worker. This placement most always occurs during the second year of the master field placement as the school-based field instructors want the students to have had the master's foundation curriculum and completed at least two of the three required courses.

Upon meeting the course and field requirements, students are issued a letter by the School of Social Work informing them and their prospective employers that they are eligible for temporary approval as a school social worker. Once they are employed in a school system, the School of Social Work, at the request of the employing district, issues a school social work certification that is then registered with the State Department of Education. If the student is not hired by a school district within five years of graduation, the State of Michigan requires that the student retake all three classes listed above to remain eligible for continued certification.

Requirements vary for school certification from state to state. Students need to research state requirements if they plan to relocate after graduation.

Specialty Program in Alcohol and Drug Abuse (SPADA)

SPADA is an eighteen credit-hour program that prepares students and working professionals to function and deal more effectively with substance abuse issues and problems. The program addresses prevention, community education, assessment, treatment, clinical supervision, program management, evaluation, and rehabilitation. (www.wmich.edu/hhs/spada/index.html)

The SPADA program consists of four classroom courses and a six-credit-hour field placement for the master student. Undergraduates can also take the coursework as electives but do not receive a certificate nor are they required to complete the fieldwork. Master's students can complete the field placement requirement in their foundation or concentration year by being placed in a setting that primarily focuses on substance abuse. However, many treatment settings prefer that the student complete their field placement during the second year of the master program if the student has limited practice experience. Coursework includes Seminar in Substance Abuse I and II, Biology of Addictive Drugs, and Etiologies of Substance Abuse.

Holistic Health

This certification program is one of only a few such programs in the country. It focuses on holistic health theory and research from a promotion, prevention, and treatment perspective. Opportunities for advanced training within the program exist in areas including stress management, nutrition and lifestyle, illness and healing, and self-regulation. (www.wmich.edu/hhs/holistichealth/index.html)

The program consists of twelve credit hours of required courses and six credit hours of electives. The four required courses are Introduction to Holistic Health Care, Seminar in Holistic Methods I and II, and a field placement. Students may choose from seventeen electives including Holistic Therapies, Holism and the Environment, Holistic Approaches to Healing through Visual Arts, and Holistic Approaches to Relationships. Students can complete the field placement requirement in the master's program in the foundation or concentration year by being placed in a setting that utilizes holistic health theories and methodologies.

Nonprofit Leadership and Administration

The School was instrumental in the development and implementation of the University's multidisciplinary graduate certificate program in Nonprofit Leadership and Administration (NLA). The purpose of the NLA certificate program is to enhance the management capacity of nonprofit organizations. It is designed to meet the professional education needs of individuals currently filling leadership roles in nonprofit organizations, as well as those who plan to fill those roles in the future. The NLA certificate program consists of eighteen credit hours (including two social work courses) from eight different University departments (see web site: www.wmich.edu/spaa/NLCert.htm).

TIME AND ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance in field placement is a beginning benchmark of the developing professional social worker. Students should treat their agency and agency expectations as they would a formal job. If a student is not going to be able to go to field placement for a *legitimate* reason, the field instructor should be notified and a plan to make the hours up initiated. Field instructors are encouraged to notify the faculty liaison immediately if there

are issues surrounding the attendance of the student in the field placement. A sample time log that can help keep track of the student's hours can be found in Appendix G.

If, at the end of the semester/session, a student is less than ten hours short of the required number of hours, the student should inform the faculty liaison of their plan to make up the hours. If the student is more than ten hours short of the required number of hours, the faculty liaison should issue a grade of incomplete for the semester/session. The faculty liaison should require the student to submit a written plan signed by the field instructor and the student addressing how the hours will be made up prior to the student beginning the next semester/session of field placement. Faculty liaisons have the authority to approve or disapprove all plans.

B.S.W. Students

CSWE requires B.S.W. students to complete a minimum of 400 total hours for the academic year. B.S.W. students begin field placement in the senior year selecting a two-semester experience in the fall/spring or spring/summer I sessions. Fall and spring field placement requires approximately a 16-hour per work week commitment, the spring and summer I requires approximately 16 and 29-hour work week commitment respectively of fieldwork for a total of 400 hours. The idea is to 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. *Refer to the B.S.W. section of the manual for information about the required field laboratories and field seminars.*

M.S.W. Students

CSWE requires that M.S.W. students complete a minimum of 900 total hours of field placement.

- **To meet the CSWE requirements, the School of Social Work requires that M.S.W. foundation students complete a minimum of 428 total hours per academic year.**
- **To meet the CSWE requirements, the School of Social Work requires that M.S.W. concentration (IP or PP&A) students are required to complete a minimum of 472 total hours per academic year. (Students completing the school social work certificate in Michigan are required to complete 500 hours of field placement in a school setting.)**

CSWE requires that advanced-standing MSW students complete a minimum of 500 hours. However, WMU School of Social Work requires 96 hours during Summer II semester in addition to the concentration placement requirements. Thus, all advanced-standing students need to complete a total of 596 hours of field during the three-semester placement period.

Students begin field placement in the fall and continue through the spring semester (September – April). Field placement requires approximately a 16-hour per week commitment. Students log approximately 16 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. *Refer to the M.S.W. foundation sequence of the manual for information about the required field laboratories, field hours, and field seminars.*

UNIVERSITY BREAK PERIODS

The University has an established calendar of holidays and break periods and students are not required to be in field placement during these periods. All students have the current University calendar; it is distributed annually at the field instructor orientation, and is also available on the web (www.wmich.edu). Official University holidays and breaks such as Thanksgiving, winter break, spirit day, spring break, legal holidays, *or* those officially observed by the agency are granted to the student. However, students may not count any of the hours taken for holidays; the field hours missed due to a holiday must be completed on alternative days. There are no policies governing sick time, family illness, or snow days so the student and the field instructor need to negotiate a plan to make-up field hours that fall outside the official University calendar and seek faculty liaison approval for any plan.

THE LEARNING CONTRACT

The learning contract is a plan for the field experience, which allows the student, the field instructor and the faculty liaison to focus on the learning tasks and goals/objectives of the placement. It helps all parties get a “bird’s eye view” of what will be accomplished. The faculty liaison is available for consultation to the student when writing the contract and will initiate the deadlines for when it is due. The student is responsible for brainstorming the ideas for the learning contract in consultation with the field instructor regarding the specifics. Once this has been accomplished, the faculty liaison reviews and approves or suggests alterations of the draft document. The final document when finished is signed by the student, the field instructor (primary and secondary if there are both) and the faculty liaison.

The learning contract contains objectives and activities that address the learning opportunities which will be created to provide direction and continuity in the learning process. Both objectives and activities must be clear, specific, and measurable. This involves three criteria: objectivity (what can be seen and measured), completeness (provide enough information), and clarity (any reader can understand).

The specific steps that make up the outline of the learning contract can be written with individualized style but all learning contracts should include the following categories with the specified information:

Identifying Information

This section should include the student's name, agency name, the field instructor's name and direct phone number. The name and contact information of the secondary field instructor is also needed if there is one.

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for each field course, as listed in the course syllabus, need to be clearly identified. Each student is to write an outcome statement for each learning objective

Description of Learning Activities at the Agency

Learning activities are described for each learning objective. Certain activities are required of all students; for example, practicing in compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics standards is not an optional activity. Other activities that contribute toward meeting the learning objectives are specific to the agency's opportunities and student's learning needs. Consideration is given to the type of agency, the needs of the clients served, agency limitations and boundaries, and what the community needs from this agency. In addition, the student's learning style and the field instructor's teaching approach will need to be taken into consideration. Students use this opportunity to stretch themselves professionally and create activities that will take them beyond their current knowledge base and push them into new areas of professional experience.

Special attention should be devoted to the student's understanding of oppression and discrimination and the development of advocacy skills to promote economic and social justice.

Student Personal Professional Development Activities

This section should identify what the student hopes to acquire in terms of personal growth and development as a result of the field placement experience. Interpersonal skill development, such as appropriate use of confrontation, assertiveness, self-awareness, and boundary development are examples of these activities. Student attitude toward placement, clients, and the student's level of comfort/discomfort should be areas to explore during placement. The student should identify any particular shortcomings or skills related to specialized interests as areas of potential growth.

Additional Information

The writing of the contract will reflect standards appropriate to the college level. Spelling, clarity, and conciseness are important considerations. A revised/updated contract should be developed for the second semester/session. All persons involved with the field placement need to sign the learning contract. If a student has a primary and a secondary field instructor, both should sign the contract.

The learning contract template for the B.S.W. and M.S.W. foundation placements can be found in Appendix N. Samples of IP and PP&A learning contracts can also be found in Appendix N.

EVALUATION AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Evaluation is both an individual and a shared process and is a springboard for growth. Interaction in each student-field instructor supervisory conference has evaluation components. At the end of the semester/session, the field instructor and the faculty liaison formalize the evaluation process with the student. Positive learning requires constant feedback. Therefore, students should be kept informed as to how they are doing throughout the placement as opposed to receiving feedback only at the end of the experience. The *regular* supervisory conference held with the student and the field instructor(s) is a vehicle for feedback, which is important to the learning experience. Field instructors should call the faculty liaison immediately if they have any questions about the student's participation or other problems related to the placement. The longer a problem occurs, the longer the problem will take to solve.

Student performance for each semester will be summarized in a formal, written evaluation, completed at the end of each semester. The evaluation forms for B.S.W. and M.S.W. students are included on the learning contract template. Evaluation forms for the IP and PP&A placements are found in Appendix L. The appropriate evaluation form can be downloaded from the Office of Field Education website by the field instructor each semester; this can be found in the "Information and Forms for Agencies" section. The due date for the evaluations can also be found on the website under "University Calendar" in the same section. Written comments are encouraged to add depth and clarity and to personalize the evaluation. Field instructors should consider having the student complete a self-assessment by filling out a blank copy of the evaluation. The student and the field instructor can then sit down and compare the ratings, which will promote growth and identify areas for continued improvement.

Both field instructor and student are required to sign the evaluation. If the student has a primary and a secondary field instructor, both signatures are required on the evaluation instrument. The student's signature means only that s/he has read the report, but does not necessarily connote agreement. Cooperation of the field instructor in mailing these forms by the deadline is extremely important as the student will receive a grade of incomplete if the form is late.

In addition, at the end of the placement (Spring semester or Summer II session), all field instructors and students are asked to complete a computerized scantron evaluating the field education experience. These are sent out by the Office of Field Education with a due date and instructions. The feedback on these forms is very valuable to the Office of Field Education and the School of Social Work and is used for program improvement purposes. Feedback is also welcome and encouraged at any time throughout the academic year. Please contact the coordinator of field education at any time with issues or concerns.

GRADING

Grading is a symbolic expression of evaluation and is the responsibility of the faculty liaison in conjunction with the field instructor. Grades for field education are assigned on a credit/no credit basis. Criteria for grading will include student progress as measured by the evaluation instruments, field instructor consultation with the faculty liaison, and the outcome of the site visits by the faculty liaison.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University has policies related to academic integrity, academic probation, dismissal, and the grievance and appeal procedures. Students are responsible for abiding by all policies and procedures related to the expectations of academic integrity. For a detailed description of the student grievance policies and procedures, refer to the University undergraduate or graduate catalog section on “Student Rights and Responsibilities” which can be accessed via the web page: www.wmich.edu and the B.S.W. & M.S.W. student handbooks.

PROBLEMS IN THE FIELD PLACEMENT

Field education is a program in which more than 200 social work students participate each year. Approximately 150 human services agencies are involved. When this many people get together with this many agencies, it is not surprising that a few problems arise from time to time. If students have questions, they should first talk to their field instructor. It is natural for students to have questions, concerns and anxieties. The student must take the initiative and responsibility for their own learning and utilize the problem-solving model to work on resolving problems in the field placement.

Procedures for Students to Follow When Problems Arise:

- The student first talks to the primary field instructor about concerns and problems concerning the placement. A student may choose to obtain advice from the faculty liaison before talking to the field instructor.
- Once the student has talked to the field instructor and if problems still remain unresolved, the student may request a meeting between the faculty liaison and field instructor. The faculty liaison can consult with the coordinator of field education about the problem if needed.
- If a satisfactory solution is still not found, the coordinator of field education should be consulted and a meeting with the faculty liaison and the student should be held. If the field placement is going to be broken, the student, faculty liaison, coordinator of field education, and field instructor if possible, may participate in a Professional Review Committee (PRC) meeting to determine the plan of action (see section on broken placements on page 21).
- If a student is experiencing problems related to the faculty liaison, he/she should first discuss the issues with the faculty liaison. If this does not resolve the problem, the coordinator of field education should be consulted and will attempt to mediate the problem. If this does not resolve the problem, the student can consult with the director of the School of Social Work.

Some simple ways to avoid problems:

- Plan ahead.
- Make the learning contract reflect interests and needs. Compare the learning contract with the evaluation instrument to assure consistency.
- Request frequent and regular supervision from the field instructor.
- If students have special constraints, i.e., a documented disability, pregnancy, illness in the family, transportation problems, childcare responsibilities, religious limits, etc., which may create future problems, these issues should be discussed with the faculty liaison and field instructor early in the semester/session.

- When students meet with the field instructor, they are encouraged to prepare their own agenda.
- Students are encouraged to read all communication from the field instructor and the faculty liaison carefully.
- Students should be sure they understand directions, instructions, and requirements clearly including agency policies, guidelines, expectations, requirements, etc., and ask for assistance.

UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE IN THE FIELD PLACEMENT

The School of Social Work has the responsibility for evaluating and screening students for the social work profession. The School takes its role as gatekeeper to the profession very seriously and works with agency-based field instructors to evaluate student performance in the field placement. Although a student's classroom performance may be satisfactory, it may become necessary to recommend that a student reconsider his/her preference for the social work profession if the performance in the field placement is not satisfactory. Students who are experiencing difficulties in their field placement must take responsibility for contacting their faculty liaison immediately to begin the problem-solving process. A plan will be developed and timelines established for addressing the issues noted and monitored by the field instructor, the faculty liaison, and the coordinator of field education if indicated.

If performance has been unsatisfactory, the student will be referred to a Professional Review Committee (PRC) (see the School of Social Work undergraduate or the graduate handbook or call the director of admissions for a description of the PRC and the process), which could result in dismissal from the social work program. The results of all PRC meetings follow the regular School of Social Work procedures and are kept in the student record. All reasonable and appropriate efforts will be expended to ensure that the field placement experiences are an appropriate measure of the student's abilities. Broken placements, failing field grades due to poor performance or professional incompetence, and violations of the NASW Code of Ethics could trigger a PRC meeting. These are explained below.

Broken Placements: Interruption, Dismissal, or Request for Removal

A student whose placement is broken for any reason including interruption or dismissal, will receive the grade of either incomplete or no credit for the semester/session in which they are enrolled. If a placement is broken due to professional incompetence, the student will be referred to a PRC meeting for evaluation and review and could be dismissed from the social work program. The field instructor will be requested to put the concerns in writing and may be asked to attend the PRC meeting. If a student is re-placed into a new agency, the placement will be monitored closely by the faculty liaison to ensure that prior difficulties are not a continued issue. When the student develops the new learning contract, the student in consultation with the new field instructor and faculty liaison will include elements that address the issues that required a change of placement. Previously logged hours may need to be repeated if the student is retained in the program and placed in a new agency. This will be determined during the PRC meeting. **Any student who changes placements after the placement has started will have an additional 50 hours added to their placement requirement.**

At any point in the field placement, the field instructor can request immediate removal of the student from the field placement if the student's behavior or performance seriously

places at risk the quality of services delivered to clients and/or the reputation of the agency. The faculty liaison and coordinator of field education need to be contacted immediately whenever there is serious cause for concern. The field instructor will be requested to put the concerns in writing and may be asked to attend the PRC meeting.

Failing Field Grade

A failing grade for professional incompetence, inability to perform in field placement, and/or inability to accomplish the required competencies will trigger an immediate PRC meeting where the student could be terminated from the program. The field instructor will be requested to put the concerns in writing, and may be asked to attend the PRC meeting.

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION APPLIES TO ALL B.S.W., M.S.W FOUNDATION AND M.S.W. CONCENTRATION STUDENTS

Performance Issues: Competence Variables

During the course of the student's educational program, the faculty liaison and agency field instructor will continuously evaluate the professional competence variables.

Students should be able to:

- Relate to people with warmth and empathy and communicate feelings appropriately
- Recognize the essential worth and dignity of all human beings
- Appreciate the value of human diversity and to offer services to persons in need of assistance regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, physical condition, and/or value system
- Be willing to grapple with personal issues that include religion, sexual, and political preferences, etc., to ensure that their individual personal views are not imposed on clients.

Professional Incompetence Issues

Professional incompetence signifies that a student is not adequately or appropriately performing at his/her program level. The following list contains examples of behaviors that constitute professional incompetence:

- Students who are not offered a field placement after three agency interviews will be referred to the Profession 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.
- Lack of commitment to the values of the social work profession
- Exhibiting professional inappropriateness
- Inability to establish and maintain positive and constructive interpersonal relationships with clients and field instructors
- Inability to perform professional duties due to personal problems
- Refusal to accept and follow through on field placement assignments
- Inability to accept constructive feedback from the field instructor and/or faculty liaison
- Attendance problems or failure to communicate with field instructor about schedule difficulties
- Consistent lateness in meeting deadlines and in completing work

- Inability to apply professional skills and knowledge gained through classroom learning to the field experience
- Additional areas as identified by the field instructor or faculty liaison.

Violations of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics

B.S.W. and M.S.W. students in the School of Social Work are required to conduct themselves according to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. This Code of Ethics is used for making decisions about whether students have exhibited unethical behavior. Ethical behaviors as designated by the Code of Ethics are part of the requirements and standards for the program. All students have access to a copy of the NASW Code of Ethics upon entering the program (see Appendix B or the NASW web site www.socialworkers.org for a copy). Discussion about the Code of Ethics occurs in social work field education labs, seminars and practice classes.

The following behaviors are examples, but not a complete list of behaviors, which constitute a violation of the NASW Code of Ethics or misconduct that could result in a meeting of the Professional Review Committee (PRC), which could result in dismissal from the program:

- Engaging in sexual activities with clients
- Participation in dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation
- Exploitation of clients for personal advantage
- Engaging in an inappropriate dual relationship
- Convicted of a felony offense while in the School of Social Work Program.

Violations deemed to be of a serious nature will result in prompt termination from the School of Social Work Program.

STUDENT SAFETY IN THE FIELD PLACEMENT

Safety of students in their field placement is a huge priority for the School of Social Work. While we do not want the student to be shielded from the realities of professional practice, immersing students in the realities of practice can also expose them to safety and security risks. Many students arrive at their field placement with concerns about personal safety that can significantly impact their learning opportunities and their experiences. The School of Social Work and all field placement agencies are encouraged to partner to reduce risks for students in field placement.

All students receive an introduction to safety in the field during their field education laboratories in the B.S.W. program and in the foundation sequence of the M.S.W. program. This preparation includes awareness of danger, assessment of the client, the environment, oneself, and intervention skills to de-escalate potentially violent situations. All students are also required to complete the safety check list by the established due date. This document will encourage dialogue between the student and the field instructor and should be reviewed regularly.

The safety orientation provided by the faculty liaison is organized around the following objectives:

- To raise student consciousness about potential violence and place such violence in a contextual frame so that students maintain empathy with clients

- To place emphasis on preventing violence by providing students with knowledge of precautionary measures, including alertness to possible danger signals about the immediate environment and behavior of clients
- To encourage students to assume responsibility for their own safety and to trust their own feelings and intuition
- To help students develop a framework and various options for responding to potential danger
- To provide activities for students to demonstrate how safety information is relevant in practice situations
- To provide content that is consistent with social work values and principles and congruent with the curriculum.

The following information should help the student and the field instructor frame discussions regarding safety in the field placement:

Situations That Require Assessment and Planning

For each situation a student will be assigned, an assessment of the following should be included:

- What does your involvement with the client mean to them?
- How does the client perceive you?
- How does the client perceive the alternatives?
- How does the client perceive the consequences?
- How does the client perceive their role and their responsibilities?

Considerations and Guidelines When Working with Individuals with Mental Illness
(Griffin, W., et al., 1995)

Fear of mentally ill, to a great extent, is unfounded. Mentally ill individuals usually exhibit fear and confusion rather than assaultive behavior or aggression. The following may be helpful when working with individuals with mental illness:

- State clearly who you are and the purpose of your contact
- Be empathetic, non-threatening, and sincere in your intention to help
- Give honest, factual answers whenever necessary
- If you do not know, say so
- Do not belittle any concerns which the client raises
- Particularly on the first contact, do not give advice
- Be supportive in all comments and gestures and remember that nonverbal communication is extremely important
- Assumptions are dangerous; don't assume that individuals with mental illness should "know better" and are in need of a good lecture
- Keep all your promises, especially about appointments and following up; your credibility is on the line
- Know how to activate emergency backup and use it if the client appears to be a danger to themselves or others.

Pre-Incident Indicators That Pose a Safety Risk (DeBecker, G., 1997)

- Is the person emotionally healthy?
- Is the person competent?
- Is the person substance free?
- Is the person trustworthy?
- Will the client or member of the family unit be removed from the family situation on this visit?
- Is the geographical location potentially dangerous (rural, isolated, neighborhood concerns, drug involvement)?
- Will the visit occur after normal working hours?
- Does the client have a life-threatening or serious injury?
- Are there animals present?
- Are weapons involved?

Be aware if the client exhibits the following: (Griffin, W., et al., 1995)

- Increased physical activity
- A sudden cessation of activity or forced eye contact
- Acting in a bizarre manner (active state of mental illness?)
- Non-communicative, sullen, holding back
- Client physically moves back or tells you to move back
- Carrying a visible weapon
- Clenched fists, glaring eyes, coiled posture
- Dress that is inappropriate for the weather
- Nonverbal communication does not match verbal communication.

Community Based Social Work: Personal Safety, Car and Street Safety, and the Home Visit (Street Smarts, 1992)

- Anticipate the unexpected and always have a PLAN: Be a tough target, deny privacy, attract attention, and take action.
- Pace yourself and don't schedule too many visits in one day
- Be cautious of entering environments with large groups of people
- Note all exits and stay near the door if possible
- Allow people to "blow off steam," use verbal ploys, and create cooling off time
- Be vigilant for signs of escalation such as clenched fists, dilated pupils, etc.
- If the person has been using any substances, end the meeting and return another time.

Tips for Safety (Griffin, W., et al., 1995)

- Familiarize yourself with the area prior to leaving the office. Know where you are going, plan your route and become familiar with unknown geographic areas.
- Check out your car prior to entering it. Park in well-lit areas, lock your car, and leave all valuables in the trunk prior to leaving the office.
- Wear sensible clothing and limit use of jewelry. Carry your purse across your body and drive with your belongings on the floor of your car.
- Look alert, assertive, self-confident, and in control.
- Rely on your instincts.
- Do whatever will increase your chances of a safe escape.
- Refuse to go to a secondary crime scene.

Closing the Loop: Agency Issues

Agencies are encouraged to have policies and procedures regarding employee and student safety. These policies should be reviewed, prioritized, and reinforced on a regular basis. Agency field instructors are encouraged to:

- Debrief the student after any incident
- Help the student understand how a client's cultural background and ethnicity could be vital to personal safety
- Help the student understand individual and group differences when it comes to accurately interpreting behavior.

Supervision, the Learning Contract, and the Safety Check List

- All student learning contracts should contain a section regarding student/employee safety in the agency and community
- In an effort to "close the loop" between the School of Social Work and community agencies who host student field placements, all students are **required** to complete the Safety Check List with their field instructor and turn it in to the Office of Field Education by the due date (see Appendix H)
- Cases that are "at risk" should receive more intense supervision/consultation/monitoring
- Students need to be exposed to triaging client situations, peer review (where possible), and the importance of seeking consultation in potentially unsafe situations.

Social workers nationwide are experiencing increased danger and students must recognize the potential for risk to personal safety. When in the field placement, students must be alert to environmental factors relative to personal safety.

Students are required to comply with the following:

- Agency standards regarding personal safety
- Agency standards regarding building, office safety, and security
- Agency infectious disease control procedures or OSHA requirements
- Agency standards for working with high-risk clients
- Agency policies related to the use of a personally owned vehicle specifying that the vehicle is insured and in good working order when making community-based visits and/or transporting clients on agency business
- Agency safety protocols, including building and office security, emergency procedures, management of violent clients, and home visit safety procedures.

Field instructors are encouraged to include the following during agency orientation:

- Information about the prevalence of, or potential for, violence while in field placement
- Orientation to the surrounding community and neighborhoods, or areas where the student may work, and discuss concerns that students may have regarding their work in a community-based setting
- Include opportunities for students to observe and shadow their field instructor on community-based visits
- Allow field instructors opportunities to observe and mentor students on community-based visits
- Provide resources (such as safety training, pagers, cellular telephones, etc.) to students for community-based visits if available to staff

- Carefully consider all assignments given to students and assess the assignments' potential for risk, as well as the student's ability to perform the assignment, prior to the student accepting the assignment.

Automobile Use

- Students should be aware that Michigan is a no-fault insurance state. Students should check with their insurance agent to find out what impact Michigan's no-fault auto insurance law has on your current insurance policy. The School of Social Work and/or the University cannot be responsible for you automobile insurance coverage.
- If students will be utilizing their personally owned vehicle for field placement business, they should check with their insurance carrier to insure that they are covered prior to using their automobile for field placement business.

Health Care Preparation

There are established Federal guidelines regarding occupational health and safety in health care (OSHA). These guidelines are established to protect the working public and have been developed to help employees become knowledgeable so that they can take the proper precautions, which will enhance their well-being. Certain vaccinations and/or tests are recommended for anyone who plans to interact with clients in a hospital or community-based setting. Given the nature of our health care system, a majority of the clients many of our students may be working with may not have access to or utilize the health care options available to them. Therefore, the following vaccinations/tests are being recommended for all students who are entering their field placement. The following information pertains to the Sindecuse Health Center on WMU's campus

<u>VACCINATION/TEST</u>	<u>REPEATED</u>	<u>COST*</u>
Tuberculosis skin test	1-3 years	\$10.00
Hepatitis B vaccination	One time	\$222.00 (series of 3 injections at \$74 per injection)
Tetanus/Diphtheria	10 years	\$21.00

*Prices are subject to change. Students are responsible for checking with Sindecuse Health Center for current prices.

If you have not had your Measles/Mumps/Rubella (MMR) vaccination, please consult with your health care provider.

All of the above vaccinations/tests can be received at the Sindecuse Health Center in the Nursing Walk-in Clinic. Their hours are 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Health Center does not open until 9 a.m. on Thursday, and they do not do TB tests. If you have any questions regarding this information, please call the Sindecuse Health Center at 269-387-3295 or consult with your health care provider. Current University student fees do not cover the above immunizations. Individual health insurance coverage is the responsibility of the student. Students without medical insurance are strongly encouraged to investigate the University health insurance plan.

These guidelines are interpreted differently in different settings. Please ask your specific agency if they require additional immunizations. If they do, inquire if you can obtain the vaccination at the agency where you are placed and whether the agency will cover the cost. Departments of Public Health also provide immunizations.

Please review this information carefully and take the appropriate steps to ensure your safety and well-being while in field placement.

The following situations warrant special attention by the field instructor and the student:

- The physical restraint of clients
- Transportation of clients in the student's personally owned vehicle
- Transportation of clients who have a history of violent behavior
- Interaction with clients who have a history of violent behavior
- Work in a setting when agency staff is not present.

Any incident resulting in injury to a student must be reported to the faculty liaison and/or coordinator of field education immediately.

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