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FIELD EDUCATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE COORDINATOR OF FIELD EDUCATION

The coordinator of field education is responsible for the overall functioning of the field education experience for both the undergraduate and graduate program. Implicit with this substantial responsibility is the coordinator's appropriate accountability for and authority to carry out the following functions:

Planning: To plan for, recruit, screen, and develop an adequate group of quality field placement opportunities for field education. This responsibility is shared with faculty liaisons. Towards the end of the spring semester, faculty liaisons are responsible for evaluating agency placements and confirming the availability, number, and types of placements that are possibilities for the following fall.

Placement: Develop placement procedures and assign students to placements in agencies. The off-campus field coordinator assigns students to field placements with the collaboration of the field coordinator.

Problem Solving: Assist faculty, field instructors, and students in resolving problems arising out of the field placement experience. The coordinator of field education makes a recommendation during the PRC process if a placement has been broken. Significant input is sought from the faculty liaison when indicated.

Faculty Coordination: Coordinate and assign faculty liaisons to cohorts of students placed in community-based agencies. This will be done in concert with individual student curriculum plans and interests.

Evaluation: Regularly evaluate and report on progress and problems in the field education component of the School's curricula. Work with faculty liaisons and field instructors assisting them in adhering to prescribed schedules for field placement, student evaluation, etc.

Administrative Design: Monitor the implementation of policies and procedures related to field education and determine exceptions to them. Where such policies and procedures are lacking, the coordinator will assume initiative in developing them.

Program Development: Develop faculty and field instructor's capabilities for carrying out field education objectives through such mechanisms as orientations, colloquia, workshops, seminars, and other scholarly programs.

Development of Educational Leadership: Develop and conduct workshops for the purposes of continuing education of field instructors and other area professionals. The coordinator also collaborates with faculty to develop and coordinate classroom and field curriculum objectives.

Collaboration: Collaborate with field education coordinators and practicum faculty at other colleges and universities on the enhancement of field education.

THE FIELD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A group of field instructors from diverse practice areas with various levels of experience and expertise will be recruited to serve on the School of Social Work Office of Field Education Field Advisory Committee. All appointments are two years in length and must receive the approval of the director of the School. This committee meets quarterly during the year. The committee is actively involved in the operation of the field education activities for field instructors and functions in an advisory capacity to the coordinator of field education.

THE FACULTY LIAISON

The faculty liaison assumes responsibility for his/her cohort of students. Faculty liaisons help students and field instructors in the following ways:

Orientation: When the student is ready to start field, faculty liaisons orient students to the field in field labs and field seminars.

Communication: Serves as a channel for communication between classroom faculty, students, and field instructors to promote awareness of students' needs and maximize educational opportunities in both the classroom and the field.

- The faculty liaison transmits information about the learning needs and learning problems of students from class to field and from field to class.
- The faculty liaison makes provisions for communicating with students and providing support relative to the field placement supplemental to the required field visits.
- The faculty liaison makes the final decision about whether the student's field placement learning contract is appropriate to meet the goals and objectives of the field education course.
- The faculty liaison helps the field instructor understand the curriculum and, along with the coordinator of field education, keeps the field instructor informed of developments as they occur at the School.
- The faculty liaison works in a partnership with the field instructor to help the student integrate and apply the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to the field experience.
- The faculty liaison conveys to the School the observations of field instructors on curriculum content, School policies, organization, and student achievement.

Problem Solver: As a problem solver, the faculty liaison is available for regular consultation. When problems are not able to be resolved, the faculty liaison participates in any decision to move a student from one agency to another through the PRC procedures in concert with the coordinator of field education.

Evaluation: Evaluation and the sharing of feedback is an ongoing, open process that occurs throughout the field placement. The faculty liaison, field instructor, and student participate in a final evaluation session at the end of each semester. The faculty liaison assigns a grade of credit, no credit, or incomplete to each student after consultation with the field instructor.

Faculty liaisons assist the coordinator of field education in the following arenas:

- Planning: Assist the coordinator of field education in recruiting, screening, and developing an adequate supply of field placements. Towards the end of the spring semester, faculty liaisons are responsible for the assessment of the field agencies and communicating concerns regarding future use of the agency.
- Communicating: Serves as a channel for communications between the coordinator of field education and the field agencies and field instructors. The faculty liaison informs the coordinator of field education about the agency's concerns, problems, and positive feedback regarding the student and the field education program.

Agency Visits: The expected number of visits over the course of the academic calendar is three in-person contacts between the faculty liaison, field instructor (both primary and secondary, if applicable), and student at the field agency site. Additional visits may be made if warranted by the placement situation.

GENERAL CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF FIELD SITES

The School of Social Work has established standards for selecting field sites. The educational programs of the School of Social Work are profoundly affected by the agencies, which cooperate in making field placements available. The interest of the agency in participating in the educational process may stem from a number of sources. These include increasing the social work labor force, staff recruitment, professional stimulation to staff and agency, and implied recognition of agency practice standards. Efforts are made to utilize agencies which serve minorities, women, underserved, and disadvantaged populations.

All sites need to include the following characteristics:

- the agency philosophy of service should be compatible with the social work values and ethics, the mission of the School of Social Work, and the goals and objectives of field education;
- the administrator and staff must have respect for and commitment to professional social work education;
- the agency exhibits interest and accessibility for participation in the educational process;
- the staff should be of such a size as to maintain and develop the basic program of the agency without reliance on students;
- the availability of a qualified field instructor is essential. "Qualified" refers to a required professional social work education (see information under *The Field Instructor* below), commitment, at least two years of post-degree practice experience, ability to work with a secondary field instructor if necessary, and an interest and competence in teaching. It is expected that agency administrators will adjust the work assignments and responsibilities of field instructors in such a way that it will enable them to administer these responsibilities in an effective and responsible manner;
- the agency should show a willingness to participate in the educational process and should be perceived by faculty and students as providing consistent, professional, and high quality experiences;

- the agency should be able to offer students assignments based on educational value in accordance with the student's current stage of learning, their learning objectives, and the student's learning contract;
- the agency is encouraged to make available and provide access to suitable workspace, telephones, computers, supplies, and other items as necessary to the student to enhance the agency functioning in conjunction with field education.

The B.S.W. field sites must have experiences that are compatible with the scope of practice of the bachelor's level practitioner. Experiences should be generalist in nature and provide opportunities for students to learn entry-level social work practice with diverse populations and systems of all sizes, e.g., individuals and families.

The M.S.W. foundation sites should have experiences that are compatible with the scope of practice of the beginning level master's practitioner. Experiences should provide a generalist perspective and opportunities for students to work with systems of all sizes. Agencies must be committed to helping master's level students with a beginning level of professional competence with diverse populations which is in keeping with individual student capabilities and potential.

The M.S.W. interpersonal practice (IP) field sites should have experiences that are compatible with the scope of practice of the advanced interpersonal practice level master's practitioner. Agencies must be committed to providing students with opportunities for direct clinical service and opportunities to work with individuals, families and/or groups that are in keeping with individual student capabilities and potential.

The M.S.W. policy, planning, and administration (PP&A) field sites must have experiences that are compatible with the scope of practice of the advanced policy, planning, and administration master's practitioner. Agencies must be committed to providing students with opportunities for direct experiences with the tasks inherent in the concentration's goals and objectives such as designing, maintaining, and changing community and/or agency social systems.

The Field Instructor

Field instruction requires not only experience and/or knowledge of the field of social work, but a desire to supervise a student. A field instructor should have positive feelings toward social work education as a process and be aware that student supervision can be frustrating, stressful, and time consuming as well as rewarding, energizing, and educational.

Field instructors are selected cooperatively by the coordinator of field education and the agency and should meet the following criteria:

- for the B.S.W. student, the field instructor should possess a CSWE accredited baccalaureate or master of social work degree, and at least two or more years of post-degree experience (EPAS standard 2.1.4);
- for the M.S.W. student, the field instructor should possess a CSWE accredited master of social work degree, and at least two or more years of post-degree experience (EPAS standard 4.3);

- a human service professional who desires to function as the student's primary field instructor (task assignments, daily involvement, etc.) must work in concert with the consultation of a secondary field instructor who does meet the above requirements. The human service professional must possess standards and values that are consistent with those of the social work profession and must demonstrate a competent and reasonable level of successful practice with appropriate experience. The secondary field instructor must provide the student with regular supervision, co-sign the student's learning contract, all evaluation materials, and be present to meet with the faculty liaison, primary field instructor, and student during agency visits or during problem solving;
- all field instructors should abide by the NASW Code of Ethics.

Functions of the Field Instructor (Primary and Secondary)

- conducts a structured and well-planned orientation to the agency's programs, policies, resources, and sociopolitical context for the student (see the suggested orientation check list in the Appendix G);
- participates in conferences with the faculty liaison and student on a routine basis or whenever problems arise and informs the faculty liaison of student's progress and notifies the coordinator of field education of any problems with the student;
- gives the student continuing and clear feedback throughout the field placement. If a problem with a student develops, gives the student the opportunity to overcome the problem behaviorally, keeping in mind the distinction between educational supervision and psychotherapy;
- holds regularly scheduled conferences with the student (a minimum of one hour per week per student in addition to preparation time) and is usually present during the hours when the student is in field placement;
- monitors the student's hours (see sample time log in Appendix H);
- is accessible to the student and faculty liaison for consultation;
- develops with the student an initial learning contract which addresses learning objectives, means for their attainment, and criteria for assessment of goal achievement;
- assures that tasks students are given to complete are appropriate social work learning experiences that are linked to the student's learning contract;
- helps the student assess and reassess educational needs, i.e., what they know, what their learning needs are, and what their learning style is; ensures that the student is not under- or over-utilized;
- teaches the student the skills and appropriate behaviors needed to accomplish tasks in the field placement;
- interprets the student's role to the agency and the agency to the student; facilitates the establishment of inter- and intra-organizational contacts;
- encourages and supports the student's integration of the values and ethics of the social work profession utilizing the NASW Code of Ethics as a guide;
- helps the student integrate theoretical knowledge and knowledge from previous experiences with present practice;
- participates in a formal evaluation process with the student and the faculty liaison at the end of every semester (see evaluations in Appendix L);
- provides feedback to the faculty liaison and/or the coordinator of field education regarding recommendations for improving the overall field education program, classroom preparation for field, curriculum, etc.;

Supportive Services

- The Office of Field Education sponsors a fall conference, a winter career fair, and spring appreciation luncheon and workshop.
- The Office of Field Education provides training for new field instructors.
- Field instructors are entitled to WMU library cards.
- Field instructors are eligible for adjunct status after concluding their second sequential year of service to the School. This includes entitlement to a WMU identification card. The card includes a number of benefits such as parking privileges and discounts at the WMU bookstore. Field instructors will be nominated by the coordinator of field education for these benefits during the spring semester.
- Field instructors are provided access to the field education manual that includes uniform information and guidelines about the field education program, and the B.S.W. and M.S.W. curriculum and program objectives.
- Faculty, on occasion, conduct research projects in conjunction with field work agencies. For further information, contact the coordinator of field education or the director of the School of Social Work.

THE STUDENT

Each student carries responsibilities for providing services in accordance with the policies of the agency or organization, the School, the values of the social work profession, and the NASW Code of Ethics (see NASW Code of Ethics in Appendix B). All students are expected to develop professional discipline, identification with the role of the social worker, and competence in assuming this role. All students are expected to be active seekers in the development of their professional capacities.

- **Recording:** All students are required to prepare written materials as part of their agency-based activities. The specific form of recording and its focus will be governed by the requirements of the agency and the School and the responsibilities of the individual student. Recording is viewed as a device for educational supervision, promoting professional development, and administration of agency services.
- **Size of Workload:** There is no formula for determining the size of the workload, as the amount of time and work required varies widely in relation to the nature of the service of the agency. It is expected, however, that students will be engaged to the fullest of their capacities in professional activity and educationally sound learning experiences during the time they spend in the field. B.S.W. and M.S.W. foundation students should have a workload that includes opportunities to work with all size systems.
- **Communications:** Students are responsible for informing field instructors about their learning needs and style. They are responsible for negotiating a learning contract with the field instructor and support of the faculty liaison to meet the objectives of the field courses. They are expected to take the initiative in choosing challenging tasks to undertake in the agency and in informing the field instructor when they are being under- or over-utilized. Students are expected to communicate with their field instructor and their faculty liaison as necessary to keep them informed or when problems arise.

- *Maintaining Client Confidentiality*: Students are expected to maintain the confidentiality of agency clients when discussing cases and/or completing written assignments.
- *Supervisory Conferences and Evaluations*: Students are expected to come prepared to supervisory conferences with questions and issues to be discussed. Students are responsible for taking an active role in the conferences and the evaluation process. They are responsible for integrating and applying theoretical knowledge from the classroom to their field experience. Students are also responsible for evaluating their field placement experience and the field seminar.