FIELD EDUCATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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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 quality field placement opportunities with input from faculty, students, and community members.

Placement: Develop placement procedures and approve student placements in agencies.

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.

FacultyCoordination: Coordinate and assign cohorts of students to faculty liaisons placed in community-based agencies.

Evaluation: Regularly evaluate and report on progress and problems in the field education component of the School's curricula. At the end of each academic year, Field Coordinator requests feedback from faculty regarding the quality, availability, number, and types of placements that are possibilities for future semesters.

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 instructors’ capabilities for carrying out field education objectives through such mechanisms as orientations, colloquia, workshops, seminars, mentoring, and other scholarly programs.

Development of Educational Leadership: Coordinate, develop and/or 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 COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD (CAB)

The School of Social Work at Western Michigan University has established a Community Advisory Board (CAB) to support the mission of the school. The CAB consists of
professional social workers, as well as professionals from other disciplines and fields, who represent local and regional communities that have an interest in the mission, goals, and objectives of the School of Social Work. Field Education is a standing agenda item at each meeting of the CAB. The CAB serves in an advisory capacity to the Field Coordinator.

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:** 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 to help students maximize their 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 required competencies 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 Solving:** Available for regular consultation with students and field instructors and participates in the problem solving process outlined in the Field Placement Procedures section of this manual. Assist students and agencies in completing and submitting the Accident Form to WMU when the student experiences an accident in the placement. (See Appendix D.9 and D.10).

**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 to each student after consultation with the field instructor. Faculty liaisons assist the coordinator of field education in the following arenas:

- **Planning:** Provide input to the Field Coordinator regarding the quality, availability, number, and types of placements that are possibilities for future semesters communicating any concerns regarding future use of the agency.
• **Communicating**: Serve as a channel for communications between the coordinator of field education and the field agencies and field instructors. Serve as a link between the School of Social Work and each student’s agency. Inform 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 faculty liaison is expected to coordinate and conduct approximately three agency visits per academic year. Visits are conducted with the field liaison, the field instructor (both primary and secondary, if applicable), and student all present. Various technological means of conducting a field visit may be employed as a substitute to an onsite visit when appropriate. The first visit is expected to take place early in the first semester of the placement. In addition to the three expected visits, additional agency visits may be necessary if warranted by the placement situation, e.g., to provide additional support and mentoring to a new agency or a new field instructor, to problem solve with the student, the field instructor and the agency...

**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, commitment, practice experience, ability to work with a secondary field instructor if indicated, and an interest and competence in teaching students placed at the agency. 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 provide 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 level of education and the learning competencies outlined in the learning contract/evaluation.
• 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 BSW field sites must have experiences that are compatible with the scope of practice of the bachelor’s level practitioner. The MSW foundation sites should have experiences that are compatible with the scope of practice of the beginning level master's practitioner. Experiences for the BSW and the MSW foundation 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, groups, families, organizations and communities. Agencies must be committed to helping students with a beginning level of professional competence with diverse populations.

The MSW 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 groups.

The MSW 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 BSW student, the field instructor should possess a CSWE accredited baccalaureate or master of social work degree, and preferably two or more years of post-degree experience (CSWE Accreditation Standard 2.1.6)
• For the MSW student, the field instructor should possess a CSWE accredited master of social work degree, and preferably two or more years of post-degree experience (CSWE Accreditation Standard 2.1.6)
• A human service professional that 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 that meets the above requirements. The human service professional must possess standards and values which are consistent with those of the social work profession and must demonstrate a competent and reasonable level of successful practice with appropriate experience.
• The expectation is that students will receive an hour of supervision per week from a credentialed social work with two years of experience in the field. This hour may be a combination of individual and group.
• If individual supervision is not available at the agency, secondary supervision should be pursued to ensure that the student receives an appropriate level of supervision. The student and agency should let the field coordinator know that this is a need and secondary supervision will be arranged by the school. If a secondary supervisor cannot be identified, a different placement will need to be pursued for the student to ensure their learning needs are met.
• In some cases, bi-weekly secondary supervision may be appropriate when the primary (site) field instructor is readily available to the student throughout the week and if the primary (site) field instructor has an advanced degree in counseling psych or marriage and family therapy. Some students also bring more or less experience to the placement and this factor will be considered as well in determining the need for more or less supervision, but must be approved by the field coordinator through consultation with the field coordinator and the agency.
• All field instructors (both primary and secondary) should abide by the NASW Code of Ethics.

Functions of the Field instructor

The list below includes responsibilities of field instructors. In settings where a secondary field instructor is needed, the primary and secondary field instructors should review the following list and determine how responsibilities will be divided. In settings where a primary and secondary field instructor are used, both instructors are expected to communicate frequently and clearly with each other, the student, and the faculty liaison regarding development and progress as it pertains to the student’s learning. Both primary and secondary supervisors are expected to participate in the development, review, and scoring of the learning contract/evaluation for each semester.

• 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 D.5)
• Participates in the problem solving method outlined in the Field Placement Procedures of the Field Manual
• 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 accessible during the hours when the student is in field placement
• Monitors the student’s hours (see sample time log in appendix D.4)
• Is accessible to the student and faculty liaison for consultation
• Develops with the student an initial learning contract
• Helps the student assess and reassess educational needs, i.e., what they know, what their learning needs are, and their learning style
• 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 learning contract/evaluations in appendix F)
• 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 for Field Instructors**

• The Office of Field Education sponsors continuing education (CEU) opportunities that are free of charge in August at the Field Instructor Orientation and in May at the Field Instructor Appreciation Day
• Additional CEU opportunities may be available throughout the year if the minimum number of paying attendees has been reached. Field instructors are to ask the CEU coordinator if they can attend free of charge for these sessions.
• The Office of Field Education provides training for new field instructors.
• Field instructors are eligible for adjunct status after concluding their second consecutive year of service to the School which is a symbolic gesture of our appreciation. Field instructors will be nominated by the coordinator of field education for these benefits during the spring and/or summer I semester. Field instructors who are interested in teaching as a part time instructor must go through the proper channels regarding submitting an application. (Contact the Associate Director of the Social Work Department for more details).
• Field instructors can access the field education manual on the field education website that includes uniform information and guidelines about the field education program, and the BSW and MSW curriculum and program objectives. Hard copies of the manual are provided upon request.
• 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 to inquire about current or future projects.

**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 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. Students are expected to initiate the problems solving method as needed in the Field Placement Procedures section of the Field Manual.
• **Recording**: 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. 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 continuously and actively seek engagement in professional activity and educationally sound learning experiences during the time they spend in the field. BSW and 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. 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 regularly.

• **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.