

# **Social Work Field Education Manual**



**School of Education, Social Work  
and Psychological Sciences**

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# UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY

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## MSW Field Education Manual

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## **Introduction**

The MSW Field Education Manual provides the current policies and procedures of the UMKC Department of Social Work for field practicum. As a resource for students and field agency personnel, this manual should be consulted when there are questions or issues concerning the field practicum. Policies and procedures outlined herein are subject to change, but if questions arise, the Director of Field Education should be consulted.

## **Mission of the UMKC Department of Social Work**

Our mission is to prepare competent, advanced-generalist social work practitioners to meet the needs of multi-cultural, diverse populations in a dynamic mid-western metropolitan context; to be culturally proficient, ethical leaders and service providers engaged in knowledge-driven, inter-professional, multi-systemic, community-based practice; who advocate for social and economic justice, enhance human wellbeing, and support individuals' capacity to address their own needs.

### Statement of Human Rights

The Department of Social Work adheres to the same values as the university. UMKC values diversity as central to its mission as an urban-serving research university and as a driver of excellence in teaching and learning. Both the university and our department embrace a broad spectrum of diversities, including race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, linguistic ability, learning style, religion, socioeconomic and veteran status, life experiences, educational level and family structure. The Division of Diversity and Inclusion is responsible for all relevant programs and can be contacted at [diversityandinclusion@umkc.edu](mailto:diversityandinclusion@umkc.edu) or by calling (816) 235-6704.

## **Field Education**

### Core Competency Areas

The MSW program at UMKC is accredited by [CSWE](#) (Council of Social Work Education) and follows core competencies as outlined by that body. More than accruable hours, the field experience is an opportunity for students to learn professional behaviors and practice behaviors aligned with those core competencies as they are built into their learning contract each year. Academic credit will not be given for life experience or previous work experience. Current Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (we're accredited under 2015 EPAS), including the core competencies, can be found on the CSWE website.

## Course Requirements

### Orientation

In late summer, all students enrolled in field practicum classes are expected to attend an orientation meeting, referred to as Field Day. Attendance is required, even if the student has attended in previous years.

Field Day will introduce students to their Field Liaison (and reacquaint them with their Field Instructor), giving them a chance to begin conversations about their learning contract and outlining goals and expectations for professional skills and ethical behaviors. Other sessions will outline the learning contract and the use of Sonia (Field Ed software).

### Field Practicum Course Syllabi

The syllabi for SOCWK 5510/5511 Generalist (or Foundation) Field Practicum I/II and SOCWK 5512/5513 Specialization (or Advanced) Field Practicum I/II can be found on Canvas and outline course content, assignments, and grading policies. Practice courses (SOCWK 5532/5533 and SOCWK 5540/5541) are co-requisites with practicum and will have their own syllabi and information on Canvas.

### Field Hours

#### *Completion of Hours*

Students are required to complete a ***minimum of 260*** clock-hours of field experience per semester, completing at least 520 per academic year. This rate averages to 16.25 hours per week of field activity for a regular 16-week semester. All hours must be completed in a “in-person” modality fostering human interactions. AI simulations are not permitted, any hours accrued through such methods will not be approved and cannot be counted towards completion of the required hours. However, student engagement with digital platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Telehealth to interact directly with clients, agency personnel, community partners, etc. is recognized as “in-person” contact and therefore allowable field hours. Practicum officially begins the first week of classes for the fall semester, but hours and schedule will be determined with the practice site and Field Instructor/Preceptor. Students may accrue up to 32 hours of field time before the semester begins if arrangements have been made with their practice site. There are no field placements offered over the summer.

Integrated learning occurs with concurrent enrollment in practice classes each semester, which means that students must plan their practicum to last for the duration of the semester. To ensure sufficient integration of classroom learning and field experience, students must be engaged in field learning for the entire semester and should not terminate field activity before finals week. Field work should be completed in a consistent manner, i.e., on a regular schedule,

for the duration of the semester. Students are not given practicum credit/hours for life experience or previous work experience (per CSWE accreditation requirements).

Field placements are agreements to work with agencies serving real people with real needs, often requiring consistency of services, even over breaks and between semesters. It is understood that some students are expected to continue field work when courses are not in session to fill this need. In addition, some agencies may require a student to work more than 16.25 hours per week. All Learning Contracts should specify, for each placement, the expectations of student attendance at the practicum site during university holidays.

### *Inclement weather*

When inclement weather occurs, the determination to close is that of the placement site. Should a student feel the weather conditions put them at risk and they would prefer not to attend practicum, they are required to address their concerns directly with their Field Instructor/Preceptor and together reach a mutual agreement. Regardless of the reason, students must make up the missed hours.

### *No Roll Over of Hours*

The 260 clock-hours required for each practicum course is our minimum standard. Students who can accumulate more hours in a semester are encouraged to do so and will be expected to do so if the minimum hours are acquired before the end of the semester. There is no roll over of hours; any hours accumulated over the 260-hour minimum for one semester cannot be credited towards the following semester. However, as previously stated, students may accrue up to 32 hours of field time before the semester begins or during the semester breaks.

*For example:*

*Joe completed 270 clock hours by the end of November. He must maintain his practicum schedule until the end of the semester in mid-December, and he may not count the next 90 hours he will accumulate in the fall semester as field work for the following spring semester. Joe will complete 360 clock-hours for his fall practicum.*

*Joe's placement agency needs him to work through the holiday break between the fall and winter semesters. Joe must include this in his Learning Contract and Practicum Conference Report II before the end of the fall semester, and the field hours he accumulates over the break will count as field work. The plan for accruing up to 32 hours outside of the semester will be discussed with his Field Liaison.*

### *Appropriate Use of Field Hours*

The purpose of field education is practical application and integration of class content. It is considered hands-on experiential learning, and therefore *excludes* time for travel to and from an

agency and meals during field experience unless recognized by the agency as work time. When at the agency, we encourage a balance of micro, mezzo and macro level activities to support the range of learnings in our advanced generalist curriculum. Meetings with Field Instructors/Preceptors, agency staff meetings, orientation to the agency, and case conferences are considered important field activities and therefore *can* be counted as field hours. As the field practicum is an essential component of the MSW coursework, Students and Field Instructors/Preceptors should recognize that learning assignments in addition to field hours are appropriate and to be expected. Field practicum hours are not appropriate study times to complete assignments from other courses. Field Day (orientation) hours do not count towards the practicum clock-hours.

### *Documentation*

Developing strong documentation skills is important to long term success as a social worker. Documentation is considered complete when all required individuals have completed and/or submitted the form(s) in Sonia. It is the student's responsibility to ensure all documentation is completed/submitted in Sonia by the deadline as listed in Sonia, on the course syllabus and on the "Important Field Dates" document. Students who consistently miss deadlines or fall several weeks behind on assignments will be suspended from participating at their practicums and further accumulating practicum hours. Students will be notified via email, along with the Field Instructor/Preceptor and Liaison, of the suspension and that they may not resume activities at their practicum sites until all documentation has been submitted in Sonia and approved by the Field Office. Students, Field Instructor/Preceptors and Liaisons will receive notification once practicum activities may be resumed.

The most routine documentation will be monthly logging of your practicum hours. Schedules should be set up between the student and Field Instructor/Preceptor and be consistent throughout each semester. Hours must be documented on the *Monthly Activity Report (or MAR)* in Sonia, approved by the Field Instructor/Preceptor, and submitted each month no later than the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the month following the month in which the hours were accrued.

### Field Practicum Learning Contract

The Learning Contract is a tool designed to shape and organize the field learning experience in each semester. The Learning Contract serves as an outline/map to guide students learning and experiences in compliance with CSWE competencies. Students are responsible for the timely and accurate completion of the Learning Contract each semester. Failure to complete and submit the Learning Contract by dates specified in the syllabi is considered unsatisfactory performance and will be a factor in grading. The Learning Contract is kept in Sonia and all parties involved are encouraged to refer to it regularly throughout the practicum experience.

The Student and Field Instructor/Preceptor develop the Learning Contract together early in the placement; it must be completed prior to the first practicum conference of each semester where it will be reviewed by the Field Liaison. The Learning Contract consists of practice behaviors



and the corresponding specific learning activities selected to provide for student growth in each competency area.

Guidelines for writing the Learning Contract include:

- Incorporation of each of the identified competency areas at all systemic levels
- Enable students to become increasingly skilled in the areas specified. Students demonstrate growth in a competency area through activities outlined in the Learning Contract.
- Learning activities should be realistic. Consider variables such as time frame of the semester or academic year, agency resources (including personnel, facilities, and materials), and the student's level of skill.
- Activities should be **tangible** and **measurable** so that the student, Field Instructor/Preceptor, and the Field Liaison can evaluate the student's learning.

The activities specified in the Learning Contract are not "set in stone". Students and Field Instructor/Preceptors should view the Learning Contract as a dynamic, living document with the flexibility to adjust to changes in a student's achievement, the agency context, the client population's needs, or the community at large. Accordingly, students and Field Instructor/Preceptors can modify a Learning Contract in Sonia any time it is necessary to change the nature of activities during the semester. Students are responsible for keeping their Liaisons apprised of any major changes.

### *Evaluation of Practice Behaviors*

Through the Learning Contract, Field Instructors/Preceptors evaluate student learning by assessing student growth in the areas of competency as demonstrated through engagement in learning activities. Evaluation is completed at the end of each semester to address areas that have presented challenges, identify opportunities for continued improvement, and to rate the level of student competency. Evaluation of students is not a simple scoring of completed activities; it is the student's growth as a generalist practitioner that is to be assessed by Field Instructors/Preceptors. Students are strongly encouraged to complete a self-evaluation as well. Discussion between students and Field Instructor/Preceptors of their evaluations of each student's growth in the competency areas provides a valuable opportunity for continued student learning.

Field Instructor/Preceptors mark an evaluation using a Likert scale of one to five rating student growth in each competency area. A rating of 1 or 2 indicates that the student has not made satisfactory growth. In such an instance, a plan of remediation or an adjustment of the Learning Contract must be documented and agreed upon by the student, Field Instructor/Preceptor, and Field Liaison. The Field Practicum Improvement Plan form (which Liaisons can find on Sonia) should be completed and a note should be made on the Learning Contract. In such an instance, the Field Liaison will contact the Director of Field Education to communicate the plan of remediation.

A rating of 4 or 5 indicates a high level of proficiency as opposed to completion of tasks in a competency area. If a student consistently receives high markings, the Learning Contract needs to be amended to stimulate student growth. The goal of the Learning Contract is to encourage students' growth.

### *Agency Profile Assignment*

All students complete this assignment during their *first semester* at an agency. This assignment provides students with an opportunity to learn information that lays a foundation for their practicum learning. The Agency Profile Assignment is to be completed and submitted along with the Initial Learning Contract.

### *Cultural Awareness Assignment*

This assignment allows students to examine more closely the impact of cultural diversity on the field practicum placement. This assignment does not take the place of other diversity activities included in the Learning Contract.

### *Practicum Conference Reports*

Field Liaisons are required to conduct practicum conferences once per semester. The Practicum Conference Reports document meetings between the Field Liaison, Field Instructor/Preceptor and Student. The reports indicate the status of the practicum placement at a particular point in the semester in terms of student activities, the mentoring nature of the Student-Field Instructor/Preceptor interactions, and achieving competency. The Practicum Conference Reports supplement the Learning Contract in guiding student learning and must be completed in Sonia each semester – refer to Syllabus, Sonia and Important Dates & Reminders for due dates.

#### *Practicum Conference Report I (Fall Semester):*

- Documents the first formal meeting of the Student, Field Instructor/Preceptor, and Field Liaison (usually done via Zoom or other online platform but could be in person)
- Should reference the completed Learning Contract in Sonia (can be shared on screen)
- Clarifies the Learning Contract activities and details
- Documents discussion of safety protocols were reviewed and addressed
- Reinforces the educational nature of the Field Instructor/Preceptor's supervision of the Student
- Documents any Improvement Plan, if needed
- If there are concerns regarding the student's performance, attendance, or professional conduct, this is an opportunity to address them early in the semester
- If the student has concerns or is unclear about their responsibilities at their placement agency, this is a good opportunity to address those as well

*Practicum Conference Report II (Spring Semester):*

- Documents the third formal meeting of the Student, Field Instructor/Preceptor, and Field Liaison (again, usually done via Zoom or other online platform)
- Should reference the completed Learning Contract in Sonia (can be shared on screen)
- Reviews student growth in the competency areas; update Learning Contract as needed
- Documents any Improvement Plan, if needed
- Records how previously identified student strengths or weaknesses are incorporated into the new Learning Contract.

*Mid-Term Evaluations*

Field Instructors/Preceptors are required to conduct mid-term evaluations in both fall and spring semesters. These evaluations focus on the student's professional behaviors (general professional skills, as opposed to competency behaviors listed on the learning contract) and are based on what has been observed thus far at the practicum agency, which can include input from anyone at the agency with whom the student has interacted. After completing the mid-term evaluations, the student, Field Instructor/Preceptor and Liaison will meet to discuss the evaluation and determine if an improvement plan for professional behaviors is necessary. If an improvement plan is necessary, it may be defined within the Learning Contract or as a separate document that will describe any additional tasks/activities. The improvement plan will be reviewed again at the end of the semester along with the Learning Contract.

Grades

Field Practicum Courses (SOCWK 5510/5511/5512/5513) are Credit/No Credit courses. Grades are issued by the Director of Field Education considering the following:

- midterm and end-of-semester evaluations
- completion of required materials, especially the Learning Contract
- completion of at least 260 field hours
- agency reports about student conduct
- timeliness of submission of field documentation

At any time, the student's performance may be assessed by the Field Instructor/Preceptor, Field Liaison or the Director of Field Education. The following is considered unsatisfactory performance in overall evaluation:

- failure to submit required materials and documentation
- non-compliance with agency policies
- demonstrated lack of professionalism

## *Incomplete*

Students who don't complete 260 clock hours in a semester or turn in all required documentation must submit a **written request** for an extension to the Director of Field Education as soon as they are aware that an extension is desired or necessary. All field work for fall classes must be completed with a satisfactory grade before beginning field hours in subsequent spring practicum courses. Failure to acknowledge deadlines for required materials (both of the Field Practicum Office and the agency) may warrant a grade of "no credit" for the entire field practicum course.

## **Field Organization**

### Approval of Practicum Sites

The field practicum experience is the cornerstone of student learning. It is in the field where values and knowledge are translated into effective social work practice. Agencies that are interested in working with MSW students are encouraged to contact the Field Office to begin the discussion of possible collaboration. The Director of Field Education approves all field placements. Faculty of the Social Work Department cannot give approval to placement agencies or practicum assignments. Students are prohibited from seeking a practicum placement on their own and must work through the Field Office process.

Agencies are selected for their ability to provide diverse learning opportunities, commitment to social work education, and commitment to client and community service. Particular merit is given to those agencies that have targeted the most vulnerable, at risk, and oppressed people and can provide the full scope of generalist and advanced generalist learning experiences needed to operationalize the practice behaviors and competencies. Agency administrative support is a valued and necessary component of the practicum and represents a significant commitment to professional education. Agency collaborations are formalized with contractual agreements that will need to be renewed every few years.

Agency partners agree to provide Field Instructors who meet the CSWE standards, i.e., they have an MSW with at least two years post-graduate experience. The Field Instructor's job responsibilities should be adjusted to make time available for student instruction and supervision. If there are no MSWs on staff, the Agency is encouraged to engage an MSW affiliated with them (on their board, a known volunteer, etc.) to provide supervision. If the agency is unable to fulfill the requirement, the Field Office will provide educational group supervision by an MSW to meet CSWE standards, but a staff member with another master's degree will still be responsible for training and supervising the student on site (this person will be known as the Preceptor). The agency is also expected to provide students with necessary resources such as space and required office equipment (computer, phone, etc.).

Agencies and field instructors agree to the following expectations:

- Agency will provide quality, competency-based learning
- Help the student integrate classroom learning with field experiences
- Provide students with experiences that encompass the generalist or advanced generalist competency areas
- Provide at least one hour of MSW educational supervision per week to the student
- Commit to collaborative participation in professional social work education
- Provide adequate workspace and office equipment for student use to meet agency expectations
- Ensure students are treated as “learners,” not “employees”
- Attend an orientation (Field Day) and participate in four agency site visits (conducted virtually and documented in Conference Reports & Evaluations) during the two-semester placement
- Reimburse students’ travel expenses at the same rate as employees when agencies require students to visit or transport clients in their personal vehicle
- Encourage and model appropriate self-care
- Provide for student safety
- Grant field instructors time to provide student instruction and supervision, and the necessary resources, such as space
- Keep Field Liaison abreast of any student concerns and/or challenges

If any of the above criteria cannot be met, the agency will not be used.

### Selection Criteria for Field Instructors

The role of Field Instructor is an essential, challenging, and rewarding one. The guidance, direction, support, validation, information, and modeling that they impart play an invaluable role in a student’s development as a professional social worker. The fulfillment of this role requires time, interest, and a commitment to personal learning as well as to student learning.

### *Required Field Instructor Credentials*

Social workers holding a CSWE-accredited MSW degree who wish to provide field instruction must apply with a résumé to the Field Office. Candidates must have obtained a MSW from a CSWE-accredited institution and have two years of post-MSW practice experience. The Director of Field Education reviews all applications, vetting each one to ensure these requirements are met. If the candidate lists other credentials, such as LMSW or LCSW, the Director of Field Education confirms this by checking with the state licensing board in which they are licensed and checks to ensure the potential field instructor has no history of disciplinary actions against them. The Field Director approves all applicants that become field instructors.

The Program prefers field instructors who have been with their agency for at least a year but may continue to work with “seasoned” field instructors even though they have moved to a new agency. Through their agency social work practice experience, potential field instructors must also demonstrate their ability to:

- Orient students to the agency, personnel, and administration
- Interpret and explain agency policy, structure, and regulations to students

- Introduce students to client systems and acquaint students with client-agency interaction
- Comply with conditions of the Field Practicum Placement Agreement between the University of Missouri—Kansas City and the agency
- Arrange HIPAA training at the agency that is appropriate for the nature of field activities the students will complete
- Assess and address the student's learning needs
- Continuously assess student performance
- Assign tasks to the students which develop and utilize student knowledge, skills, and experience
- Ensure communication concerning supervision and learning through regular meetings, conferences, group sessions, and seminars
- Meet with student at least one hour weekly, either individually or in group supervision format
- Draw from one's own academic and/or field competence in enhancing student growth
- Submit reports and forms according to established timetables
- Work with students to develop the learning contract, to provide regular feedback regarding the fulfillment of the learning contract, and to be flexible in modifying the contract to meet changing needs in the agency or in student circumstances
- Provide student workspace and equipment to complete agency tasks, including: a desk, access to a telephone, clerical resources, and computer, if possible
- Structure direct contact with service recipients as early as possible
- Review and sign off on all written documentation required by the agency and its accrediting body
- Closely monitor student activities to ensure that all assignments relate directly to the learning objectives and activities listed in the Learning Contract
- Complete the mid-semester and end-of-semester student evaluations, review with the student, and discuss with the faculty-field liaison during practicum conferences
- Complete the evaluation of field students that is a component of the School of Social Work's program assessment
- Maintain regular contact with the field liaison to ensure adequate translation of classroom learning to the field setting
- Participate in continuing education opportunities provided by the Program and other organizations to enhance knowledge and skills in field instruction
- Adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics
- Attend the field orientation meeting (Field Day) scheduled in late summer, before the start of the fall semester.

## Roles and Responsibilities of Field Participants

### *Field Office*

The Field Office includes the Director of Field Education and the Program Coordinator. The Field Office has primary responsibility over the administration of the Field Education component of the MSW Program, including developing professional relationships, establishing and maintaining Contractual Agreements, placing students at those agencies, and remediation of student issues for the field education component of the MSW Program. Expectations of the Field Office are as follows:

- to identify, approve, and maintain agencies as field practicum sites
- to coordinate Field Practicum Placement Agreements between the University of Missouri and the practicum agencies
- to select and support Field Instructors
- to coordinate the placement of students at agencies
- to select and support Field Liaisons
- to provide annual orientation for students, Field Instructors/Preceptors, and Field Liaisons (the event known as Field Day)
- to problem-solve issues related to field practicum and student placements
- to assign grades for field practicum courses
- to provide Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to Field Instructors/Preceptors for their contributions to student education
- to provide technical support for all users of our Field Education system (currently Sonia)
- to formally and regularly evaluate the field practicum program

### *Student*

Students' success in Field Practicum is predicated upon taking a very active role in their practicum learning. You are responsible for your own learning and ensuring documentation gets done and deadlines are met.

Students are expected to reflect the values of the social work profession and to always present themselves in a manner consistent with ethical professional practice in their agency. They should take every opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills in assisting individuals, families, groups, and organizations in their agency activities. Students must become familiar with the particular policies and procedures of all parties, including the practicum agency, Field Office, and [NASW Code of Ethics](#), that serve to guide, direct, and inform field experience. In addition, students are expected to seek training from the placement agency that is necessary for them to practice in compliance. The placement agency is responsible for providing agency-required training to students in field. As advanced-generalist students, all agency trainings count towards a student's required practicum hours.

Professional skills dictate good communication with supervisors around schedules and expectations. Students are expected to be present at the agency-agreed-upon times and to communicate in advance, or as soon as possible, if something comes up keeping them from their shift. The work that students do should be guided by their learning contracts. If students are asked to engage in activities that they do not perceive as being conducive to their learning and professional growth and development at the placement site, they are expected to discuss their concerns with their Field Instructors early in the process. Students experiencing conflicts or problems with their placements are advised to follow certain steps in attempting to resolve the situation:

1st: The student should address their concerns with the Field Instructor/Preceptor.

2nd: Should a resolution not be reached with the Field Instructor/Preceptor, the student should consult the Field Liaison for the next course of action.

3rd: Should the problem/situation continue, then the Field Liaison and Student should consult the Director of Field Education.

It is imperative that students voice their concerns early and within a timely manner.

Students are viewed as the co-pilot of their learning experience with their Field Instructor/Preceptor. Therefore, students are expected to be aware and proactive, reflect a desire to learn, contribute to the wellbeing of those they serve and the agency in which they are placed, and to display a commitment to the betterment of the larger community. Students will need to learn how and when to listen to Field Instructors/Preceptors, drawing from their experience and wisdom, and when it is appropriate to raise questions and have honest, possibly difficult conversations with them. Students are expected to:

- ensure all required documentation is completed and submitted to the Field Office on time
- maintain ongoing communication with the Field Instructor/Preceptor and Liaison
- create the Learning Contract with the Field Instructor/Preceptor
- obtain fundamental knowledge of the field agency (policies, procedures, culture, etc.)
- understand that while their role is *similar* to that of agency staff members, their role is first and foremost that of a *learner* (particularly important for students at worksite placements where those lines are easily blurred)
- actively seek out agency training, appropriate for the nature of field activities the student will complete
- conduct themselves as professional social workers, abiding by agency practices and regulations as well as the [NASW Code of Ethics](#)
- work effectively within different client systems
- accept constructive criticism and be willing to converse with their Field Instructor/Preceptors
- when appropriate and direction of their Field Instructor/Preceptor, assume leadership
- integrate previous learning with new knowledge and experiences

All Students (traditional and advanced standing) are made aware of the Program's professional and ethical expectations of them at Field Day (beginning of the fall semester), which orients students, field instructors & preceptors, and field liaisons to the field program and to the Field Education Manual. The Field Manual is easily accessible to all Students, Field Instructors/Preceptors, and Field Liaisons through Sonia & the program website. Incoming students receive a link to the Field Manual in their acceptance letter and are instructed to familiarize themselves with its contents. All students entering a field practicum are required to acknowledge on their field practicum application that they have read the Field Manual.

Student progress in practicum is closely monitored in several ways:



- Through their weekly supervisory meetings with their field instructors. Field Instructors are required to provide at least one hour of educational supervision per week with their field students. Field Instructor concerns should be broached with the Student during supervision.
- Through Field Education Program Coordinator monitoring of documents in Sonia. If deadlines aren't being met, messages will be sent to Students, Field Instructors and Liaisons.
- Through the required practice journals students submit in their practice courses. All students (traditional and advanced standing) submit three journals each semester they are in field education. The journal assignments ask students to discuss and process the challenges they experience in the field.
- Through agency visits (usually virtual meetings), from the Field Liaisons, documented in Conference Reports and end of semester evaluations.

### *Field Instructor*

The Field Instructor has the primary responsibility for providing learning opportunities that will facilitate the Student's growth in the social work profession. The Field Instructor assigns learning activities and tasks (identified in the Learning Contract) and evaluates student achievement at the midpoint and end of each semester. They will meet with their student and Field Liaison during Practicum Conferences. Field Instructors take on the roles of Teacher and Trainer, Leader and Guide, Supervisor and Evaluator, and all while model what it is to be Professional. Field Instructors are also part of the Field Education Office's ongoing evaluation process.

Criteria to be a Field Instructor include:

- MSW degree from a CSWE accredited program
- Minimum of 2 years post-graduate experience
- Desire and ability to commit sufficient time to supervise students (including, but not limited to, a required 1 hour per week of supervision)
- A license is not required to be a Field Instructor

Field Instructors meet with their students regularly and will maintain an ongoing relationship with the assigned Liaison. Further details about the role of Field Instructors are on the one-page handout shared at Field Day and posted in Sonia.

### *Preceptor*

If a social service agency has been approved as a practicum placement site but does not have anyone with an MSW from a CSWE-accredited program, the on-site agency supervisor is the Preceptor. The Preceptor has the knowledge, experience, and skills of working at the agency and with the particular population served. Hence, the Preceptor is the on-site supervisor responsible for signing monthly hours reports, completing or submitting student documentation in Sonia, and providing agency-specific supervision on an on-going basis. This supervision

DOES NOT replace the required 1-hour of supervision by an MSW (which will be provided by the Field Office through an Adjunct Group Facilitator). The Preceptor will also meet with the student and Field Liaison during Practicum Conferences.

Criteria to be a Preceptor include:

- Any Master's degree
- Desire and ability to commit sufficient time to supervise students

### *Field Liaison*

The Field Liaison serves as a resource to help students integrate class and field learning. They participate in the evaluations of the student field practicum, conducting at least two practicum conferences each semester, while maintaining ongoing contact with the Student and Field Instructor/Preceptor. The Liaison also serves as a resource for students and field sites. They mediate and reconcile conflicts that may arise between the Field Instructor/Preceptor and the Student. They are a manager and evaluator of the field placement, including both the student and the Field Instructor/Preceptor. For more information on the role of a Liaison, please see the one-page document shared at Field Day and/or on Sonia.

## **Eligibility Requirements and Placement**

Students on a traditional track (non BSW's) complete two different field placements during their course of study. Field experiences are designed to educationally build upon one another, providing students with comprehensive generalist and advanced generalist learning experiences. They are intended to give the student an opportunity to learn about two different organizations and concomitant cultures so that the student gains a more comprehensive perspective of social work practice. Advanced standing students complete one field placement that builds on their undergraduate field learning experience while providing them with a comprehensive advanced generalist practice experience.

### Student Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the field practicum placement, students must:

- be enrolled in the MSW Program
- complete the Field Application and submit in Sonia by the deadline
- have successfully completed, as defined by a grade of C or better, all prerequisites for the field practicum courses [NOTE: a prerequisite for SOCWK 5512 is completion of ALL Generalist coursework]
- be enrolled concurrently in the appropriate social work practice class
- have no current grades of "incomplete" from prerequisite courses in the MSW Program

- if entering as “Advanced Standing,” the final learning contract from student’s BSW field placement is submitted with their Field Application

## Placement Process

1. The first step in securing a practicum placement is for the student to **complete the Field Application form in Sonia**. Students answer questions on the field application that delineate interest, preferences, and special requirements (e.g., transportation, learning disability, schedule restrictions), along with questions that ask them to reflect on what brought them into social work and their hopes for the future. These materials must be submitted by the deadline announced by the Field Office. If these materials and a request for placement are received after this deadline, a practicum placement may not be granted. Referrals to practicum sites will attempt to match student interests and educational needs with availability, but educational needs will take priority.
2. **Student schedules a meeting with the Director of Field Education.**
3. **Student meets with the Director of Field Education** to discuss possible agency sites. Students may suggest field placement sites to the Director of Field Education during this meeting. However, students are not to contact agencies directly without first speaking with the Director of Field Education. Doing so may result in the loss of that agency as an option for placement. The Director of Field Education will determine if the agency can provide a range of learning experiences to support a generalist or advanced-generalist placement.
4. **The Director of Field Education will provide the student with a few site options. The student will do online research to learn more about these options** (not contacting the agency yet) and email the Director of Field Education with their first and second choices.
5. **The Director of Field Education will send an introductory email**, connecting the potential practicum site with the student.
6. **Student will set up a personal interview with potential practicum site.** The student should provide a résumé to the agency interviewer and present themselves in an appropriate manner. This is a good opportunity for students to ask questions regarding the specific helping activities they’ll be asked to perform. It’s also a chance for both the agency and students to formulate impressions about the feasibility of working together.
7. As soon as possible after the interview, **student notifies Director of Field Education of the outcome.** The Director of Field Education gives final approval of all field practicum placements.

If a student decides not to pursue a placement with the agency, they are advised to send a thank you note, and reconnect with the Director of Field Education. During this conversation the

unsuccessful interview will be discussed, and the student will be introduced to a second agency, repeating steps 5-7. If a student's second field placement interview is also unsuccessful, the student will again meet with the Field Director to discuss any factors underlying both interviews. In rare instances where a third interview occurs and is unsuccessful, the Director of Field Education will determine the student's appropriateness or timing regarding their pursuit of a social work field placement. Throughout the field placement interviews of all students, the Director of Field Education retains the decision-making authority regarding specific agencies at which a student may interview based on their assessment of the student's readiness for said sites.

Agencies may have onboarding requirements beyond the interview process, involving field practicum students to complete items that can include, but are not limited to:

- criminal background checks
- local police checks
- a check of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services List of Excluded Individuals
- an Excluded Parties check for excluded individuals of government funded programs
- a check of the MO Department of Health and Senior Services Employee Disqualification List
- fingerprinting
- drug testing
- immunization records
- TB testing
- current CPR card

These items must be taken care of before the first day of practicum and fall classes and should be coordinated through the Field Office. The MSW program does not pay any fees associated with the screening tools; the cost is the responsibility of the student.

### Practicum Placements

All placements take place for a full academic year, completed in consecutive semesters during the fall and spring. For example, Generalist year (or first year) students will enroll in SOCWK5510 in fall and SOCWK 5511 in spring but work in the same placement agency for both semesters. Each semester, students must complete a *minimum* of 260 hours and requirements for the fall semester must be met before starting spring classes (see section on *Incompletes*). Students in their Specialization year enroll in SOCWK5512 in fall and SOCWK5513 in spring.

The first year is about getting primary skills that are transferable to all sectors of social work. Second year students can then home in on an area of interest as they continue to develop practice skills. In preparing advanced generalist social workers, students will be exposed to micro, mezzo, and macro opportunities, exploring all levels of social dynamics – individual, family/group, or communal/policy.

The Field Office has partnerships with a limited number of agencies, both on campus and in the community, which offer stipends (monetary payments). Due to the complexity of these positions and skill sets needed, these opportunities are usually reserved for Specialization year students. Payment arrangements are made between the agency offering such a position and the student with no involvement from the university/department.

### *Placements Outside of Kansas City Area*

The Field Office will work with students needing a placement outside of the Kansas City metropolitan area. However, placement options may be more limited, and it can't be guaranteed that a suitable placement can be secured. The same placement process applies for these placements, and cases are considered on an individual basis. If a student requires a placement outside of the KC metro, it's strongly encouraged that they turn in the Field Application as soon as it's made available.

### *Work-Site Field Placement*

If a student is completing a practicum at their current place of employment, that is considered a work-site placement. A work-site practicum placement must meet specific criteria and be approved by the Director of Field Education. Not all work-site requests are approved. Those criteria are:

- Student must have a minimum of 6 months employment time with the agency.
- The practicum placement must emphasize NEW learning for the student, so it must involve a different population or duties from their paid position.
- The practicum hours must occur outside the student's designated work hours.
- The practicum must be supervised by someone who has an MSW that is NOT their direct supervisor.
- The student engaged in a work-site placement bears the risk of at-will termination. If the student loses employment FOR ANY REASON, or is suspended from work for any reason, the work-site field practicum terminates.
- Final approval is contingent upon a group meeting between the Director of Field Education, the proposed Field Instructor/Preceptor, the student, and their work supervisor.

To apply for a work-site field placement, the student must complete the Field Application, including the section (in yellow, towards the end) specifically for Work-Site Placements. There will also need to be a discussion with the Field Director at their initial meeting.

Things to consider before requesting a Work-Site Placement:

- Should the work-site practicum terminate it will cause a disruption in the student's trajectory until a new practicum site can be obtained. The Director of Field Education will work with the student to secure a new practicum site. However, the student should be mindful that the lag in time occurring to obtain a new practicum may cause them to be behind in hours. The Director of Field Education will determine if practicum hours accumulated from a terminated work-site placement may count towards meeting the course requirements.
- It's often very challenging (for all involved) to delineate between the two roles the individual plays, i.e., when one is a student/practicum-learner and when one is a paid staff-person. Boundaries are also more easily muddled which can cause added stress.
- Part of the field practicum experience is meeting new people and learning new aspects of social work roles. Networking opportunities are more limited if staying at one's place of employment, which could in turn limit future job prospecting.

In rare cases, employers may offer a flexible schedule for students to allow and work and practicum hours to be comingled. This should be discussed early on and needs to be approved by the Field Director.

### *Late Placements*

Late applications for field practicum will limit the placement options that are available and could result in not having a placement at all. Applications are made available at the beginning of the spring semester preceding the practicum. Students are encouraged to complete their application and schedule their meeting with the Field Director in the early spring. Some placements are extremely competitive; others have deadlines for accepting students that are out of the control of the Field Office.

### *Repeat Practicum Site*

Returning to a previous placement site for a second practicum is prohibited. While often students develop an affinity for and a level of comfort at an agency and wish to remain for a second practicum returning to a practicum site puts a student at a distinct learning disadvantage.

### *Change of Placement*

Students **may not** change their field placements during or between semesters. All placements are made for a full academic year. In the event of a serious conflict infringing on the completion of field duties, students are expected to actively seek a resolution.

Students experiencing conflicts or problems with their placements are advised to follow certain steps in attempting to resolve the situation:

1st: The student should address their concerns with their Field Instructor/Preceptor.

2nd: Should a resolution not be reached with the Field Instructor/Preceptor, the student should consult the Field Liaison for the next course of action.

3rd: Should the problem/situation continue, then the Field Liaison and Student should consult the Director of Field Education.

Ultimately, the Student should explore all possibilities in problem solving to resolve a situation that might lead to a change in placement. After completing the above process, if the student is still not satisfied, they can appeal through the grievance procedure outlined in the *Student Handbook*.

### *Change of Field Instructor*

If a student's field instructor is replaced for any reason, it is the student's responsibility to notify the Field Office with their new Field Instructor's contact information. Any new Field Instructor must meet the same criteria as outlined earlier in this manual.

### *Incompletes*

Should a student anticipate that they will not complete the required 260 hours by the end of a semester, they will need to petition for a grade of incomplete for the semester. The student's Field Instructor/Preceptor must sign the request in order for it to be reviewed (form is found on Sonia or can be sent from the Field Office). The Director of Field Education will review the request and determine whether or not the circumstances warrant a grade of incomplete. Not all requests will be granted, and considerations are made on a case-by-case basis. Should a grade of incomplete not be granted, a grade of no credit (NC) will be issued and the student will have to repeat the course. In such cases, any practicum hours accrued are lost.

### Ending Field Placements

As the practicum winds down to completion, it's important for students to consider the process of termination with their clients or constituents. In most cases, these additional responsibilities will be encountered during the final weeks of the second semester at an agency (SOCWK 5511 or SOCWK 5513). These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- discussing with the Field Instructor appropriate ways to terminate with clients
- terminating appropriately with clients
- completing all final agency paperwork in a timely manner
- signing all required agency paperwork & turning in agency identification, parking passes, equipment and keys
- students may also want to consider writing thank you notes to their Field Instructor and any others involved in their practicum learning for their contributions

### *Improvement Plan Process*

When an agency has concerns regarding student performance, the Field Instructor/Preceptor should follow this process to get it resolved:

1. The Field Instructor/Preceptor should first discuss their concerns with the student directly.
2. If the situation continues, the Field Instructor/Preceptor should have a conversation with the Liaison.
3. If the Liaison feels it's appropriate, an Improvement plan can be drafted. The form is available either as a PDF on Sonia (under documents on the home screen) or from the Field Office. Completing the form should be a collaborative process involving the student, Field Instructor/Preceptor and Liaison talking through what will be done and the timeframe for those changes to take place. All three parties are to sign it before turning it in to the Director of Field Education.
4. Upon receiving the signed version of the form, the Director of Field Education will add their signature and disperse signed copies to all other individuals involved.

When a student is on an Improvement Plan, it's important that the Field Instructor/Preceptor and Liaison increase communication to track progress.

### *Agency Initiated Termination*

Agencies have the right to terminate a practicum student in cases of ethical misconduct, breaking agency policies, or performance concerns that haven't been resolved after an Improvement Plan. To pursue termination, the agency should follow certain procedures:

1. The Field Instructor/Preceptor should contact the Liaison and Director of Field Education as soon as termination is sought. The agency will be requested to



provide a written statement specifying grounds and outlining circumstances for termination.

2. Should termination occur, the student must promptly return to the host agency any keys, program materials, equipment, or other items provided for their use. If any items are not returned, the student may be held financially responsible.
3. The Director of Field Education will determine whether a change in placement for the remainder of the academic year is viable or warranted and whether hours accrued will be counted.

### *Student Initiated Termination*

Should a student experience a crisis which renders them unable to complete the practicum, they may choose to terminate. As soon as possible, they should have an in-depth conversation with their Liaison and notify the Field Office BEFORE unenrolling from the course. Students are encouraged to also discuss their situation with the Director of Field Education, who as a full faculty member may be able to offer other remedies that the student and Liaison may be unaware of. Students who terminate their practicum are required to repeat the standard placement procedure and still must complete field hours as required. The student is responsible for unenrolling from the course and reaching out to the Field Office prior to the semester they wish to return (so they can resume the placement process on time).

### *Withdrawal from Practicum Courses*

Per university policy, only students can withdraw themselves from a course. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the possibility of withdrawal with their Liaison and the Field Director before doing so. If it is determined that discontinuing practicum is the best option, it's the student's responsibility to notify their Field Instructor/Preceptor and determine an agreed upon date to end their placement. Students must promptly return to the host agency any keys, program materials, equipment, or other items provided for the Student's use. Students should be aware that MSW program policy requires that they also drop or withdraw from any corequisite courses.

Hours completed in a practicum course from which the student withdraws will not count. Withdrawal from a field practicum course is considered a student-initiated termination of the field practicum and any hours accrued will be lost.

## **Safety and Risk Management**

Safety encompasses both the physical and emotional/mental wellness of the student. Students should be able to practice in environments free from physical, verbal, and psychological violence and threats of violence. Practicum sites are required to maintain a culture of safety and must demonstrate their ability to address issues of safety for their staff and potential social work students. This includes but is not limited to providing the organization's policies and procedures on safety in the workplace, an incident reporting system, and activities to minimize incidences and risk.

Students are strongly advised to recognize that the field practicum placement, as any social work environment, may involve exposure to potential personal risks and hazards. If they feel like they are being put at risk or are uncomfortable with their assigned tasks, students are encouraged to discuss this with their Field Instructor/Preceptor as soon as possible. It is the agency's responsibility to ensure that students are informed of any potential hazards related to the work and provide training to prepare students to handle those situations.

Students and agencies are required to review the NASW resource "Guidelines for Social Work Safety in the workplace", found at <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=6OEdoMjcNC0%3D&portalid=0> and shared on Sonia. During Field Day, Students and Field Instructors are encouraged to proactively address safety issues, including discrimination and harassment policies, in their field sites, including trainings, policies and procedures specific to their agencies. Liaisons review the practicum site's safety procedures with the Field Instructor and student at their first conference meeting. Through their ongoing interactions with Students and Field Instructors, Liaisons reinforce self-care practices and address any needs/issues that arise from those discussions.

Students are reminded to take reasonable precautions for their own safety (including things like parking vehicles in well-lit areas, avoiding solitude after hours without adequate security, avoiding isolation with clients, and not completing a home visit alone). However, the responsibility for ensuring Student's health and safety (physical and emotional) is that of the agency and Field Office. If a situation occurs at a placement site, the student should be sure to discuss it in with their Field Instructor/Preceptor as soon as possible. If the student feels it has not been addressed appropriately by their Field Instructor or Preceptor, they should then discuss the situation with their Liaison. Each discussion or meeting should be documented, by the Field Liaison, along with a summary of how the issue was resolved and sent to the Field Office, for review by the Director of Field Education.

When the Field Office or liaisons learn of a situation involving a student's safety in their practicum, immediate actions will be taken. The student is not required to return to the situation or agency until a plan is developed with the field office. The Liaison facilitates a discussion with the student and the agency involved within three business days of

notification to determine whether and how the issue(s) can be resolved. The Director of Field Education may be brought in at any time, by any party to assist in remediating the situation. The specifics of the situation will determine possible solutions, potentially involving outside resources or placement changes. Should a disruption in the Student's placement occur as a result of safety concerns, the Director of Field Education will find a suitable alternative practicum placement for the Student as soon as possible. In the event the Student is unable to meet the requirements for completion of the practicum by the end of semester, a grade of Incomplete will be issued with no penalty towards the Student. The Student, new Field Instructor, and Director of Field Education will collaborate to determine an appropriate timeline for completion.

Students also have shared responsibility for the safety of their clients. Should a student, at any time, be investigated for any violations or suspected wrongdoing, they must notify the Field Office immediately. Specifics for each situation will be taken into account, balancing the goals of student success and the safety for all involved. Not notifying the Field Office could put the student at risk for disciplinary actions, including loss of placement.

#### Professional Liability Insurance

The university provides professional liability insurance for all practicum students. The cost for said insurance is covered by some of the required course fees. The Field Office will provide a letter for proof of insurance for any individual student or agency upon request. Students assigned to practicum placements are not university employees and therefore are not covered by Social Security, unemployment compensation, or Workers Compensation through the university.

#### Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)

The Agency is responsible for providing students with the appropriate training on their privacy policies and procedures in compliance with the HIPAA Privacy Rule. It is incumbent upon students to seek such training at the beginning of the field placement.

#### Human Subjects Review

There are times that a student in a research course may need to enlist the practicum site to complete assignments. If any such assignments involve human-subjects research activities, the course instructor must provide guidelines and protocols, including seeking Institutional Review Board approval. The student should also thoroughly discuss these matters with their Field Instructor/Preceptor and inform their Liaison.

## Use of Personal Vehicles

Using personal vehicles for job-related travel other than commuting to and from the placement site involves additional risks. The MSW program discourages students from using their personal vehicles to transport clients. However, we defer to the agency's policy/procedures regarding such activity. Students using personal vehicles should consult with the agency regarding their policy regarding the use of personal vehicles and their own insurance agent to see if these activities are covered. Should any harm come to a personal vehicle at a practicum site, the university does not assume any responsibility.

## Job Site Risks and Hazards

Agency representatives are expected to fully disclose any known or suspected risks to students at the field site as part of the pre-placement selection process. Students are expected to review and become familiar with the agency's policies and procedures for identifying and dealing with job site hazards and emergencies. Particular attention should be paid to procedures related to potentially violent clients in both office and home visit settings. Students, agency representatives, and Field Instructors/Preceptors should assure that students are trained to deal with potential risks at their placements as early as possible during the practicum.

### *Risk of Infection*

Prior to or at the outset of the practicum, students should ask the Field Instructor/Preceptor about any required or recommended preventive health measures, i.e., screenings or vaccinations. If the student is at a site with higher risk of exposure to bodily fluids that may spread infection, the agency should provide training involving recognition of the risks and procedures to minimize risk of infection. After education and training, the student may wish to consider additional immunizations beyond those required at onboarding. Immunization services may be available at the agency or at area health departments. The student should be prepared to pay for any part of the cost not covered by their health insurance.

As the situation around COVID-19 is continually evolving, the Field office will continue to consult with [the university](#) and [CDC](#) for their most current recommendations. We strongly encourage all students to stay current on COVID vaccinations and to check with their placement agency regarding their COVID policies.

## **Children's Division Title IV-E Training**

The MSW program works in partnership with the State of Missouri Children's Division Title IV-E Training to provide Children's Division employees an opportunity to earn their MSW. Participants in that program may be allowed to complete a work-site placement (see section on work-site placements above). They should confer with their Children's Division liaison for specific requirements of the program.

## **Field Education Program Evaluation**

Evaluation is an important part of the process of learning; feedback from all participants is important to the Field Office for improving our processes and the Field Education program.

Students will receive a brief survey near the end of their fall semester to provide feedback on Field Day (practicum preparation) and general insights into the beginning of their practicum experience. In the middle of the spring semester, as they near completion of their practicum year, students will get a longer survey to evaluate their sites, Field Instructor/Preceptor, Liaison and, if applicable, their Group Supervisor as well as the Field Office. These evaluation surveys are voluntary and anonymous, distributed through university email using Qualtrics.

Liaisons will be asked to evaluate their agencies, Field Instructor/Preceptors and the Field Office in the spring semester through a survey sent only to them. Field Instructors will also be asked to evaluate their Liaisons and the Field Office through a survey sent only to them. All surveys are voluntary and anonymous and will be sent through email using Qualtrics.

Information gathered from all evaluations is reviewed by the Director of Field Education to inform decisions about sites, Field Education personnel (Field Instructors, Preceptors, and Liaisons) and program design in order to continue to provide the highest quality of educational learning and supervision for MSW students. Findings will also be shared with the MSW Program Director and Social Work Chair.

Because of the importance of having an informed feedback loop, all participants of the Field Education program are encouraged to share thoughts, concerns, and information directly with the Field Office at any time outside of the formal evaluation process.