

# FIELD EDUCATION

## Field Agency Requirements Overview

Agencies having student placements are expected to be committed to the fact that students are learners and understand that performance of students is not that of staff members. Agencies are expected to provide a diversity of assignments according to student educational needs and to provide the concrete needs, such as sufficient workspace, which are necessary for professional practice. At the same time, agency needs are respected. Learning assignments of students should not impede or hamper the agency's everyday functioning.

Agencies are to commit time for their field instructors to supervise students one to one-and-one-half hours per week and time to complete written evaluations. The agency should provide students the opportunity to attend staff meetings, in-service training, or other such meetings as may occur for the general staff.

The field placement provides students with a generalist practice experience. The program views the generalist practice model as an integrative approach to practice which attends to the profession's person-in-environment focus. Through the integration of classroom, field, and advising, students learn to move readily across system levels and among practice methods.

Field agencies are expected to provide students with the opportunity to work with a range of client systems and should provide experiences with multi-level practice in which students work with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations to the extent possible. At minimum, the field agency should provide opportunities for the student to work with clients at three client system levels with at least one of the three at the macro level of organization or community (in addition to their work with individuals, families, and/or groups). If an agency is not able to provide this minimum range, the B.A.S.W. field coordinator assists the field instructor in exploring possible alternatives.

The student should have approximately 8 of their field placement hours in direct service to clients, including collaborative and collateral visits. Building up a caseload occurs over time. B.A.S.W. students frequently shadow a social worker or other qualified staff member prior to working independently with clients. All students should have one to one-and-one-half hours of supervision per week. The remaining hours are used for administrative responsibilities, including agency recording, telephone calls, preparing for conferences, writing reports, etc. Time may also be used for consultation with field instructor, staff meetings, and other learning experiences in the setting and within the community. **It is not expected that the student be able to complete process recordings during agency time.**

Agencies need to inform the B.A.S.W. program of changes in any of the following:

1. Agency address or telephone number
2. Agency director or coordinator
3. Field instructor
4. Pending strike or labor dispute
5. Absence of field instructor from the agency for more than one week

6. Student absence for more than three days
7. Significant program or agency changes that affect day-to-day work

## Hours, Holidays, Absence, and Make-up Time

Students observe agency hours and holidays except for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and spring recess, when students will not be in field education. Absence from field education up to three days, due to illness or other emergencies, will be managed in the agency. When there are only three days of justifiable absence, the time need not be made up. Arrangements for religious observance are made between the student and the agency. The supervisor should consult with the faculty adviser about any absence in excess of three days. All field placements total a minimum of 420 hours in the field for the academic year. Sometimes students may wish to change the number of hours a week they attend placement with a consequent change in the ending date for the year. Such changes are sometimes possible provided they have the advanced approval of the field instructor and the faculty adviser.

## Travel

The agency is expected to reimburse students for travel expenses when travel is part of the required field work assignment.

## Home Visits and Safety in the Agency

Home visits are an important part of social work and should be included when appropriate. The agency and student need to make provisions for safety. The social work program recommends the following safety guidelines for students while in field work. Students need to take appropriate precautions regarding:

1. Time of day for home visits
2. Use of main streets for walking
3. Appropriate dress
4. Traveling with official agency identification
5. Use of escorts when necessary for home visits
6. Making sure agency knows date, time, location, and purpose of visit
7. Not being in the agency by oneself
8. Having access to an emergency phone

The agency should provide security to students in the same measure as provided to employees. This includes orienting students to procedures they should follow for their own safety. In the event of an emergency during the placement, the field instructor should be notified as well as the faculty adviser. The program director should be notified if the faculty adviser is not available.

## Labor Disputes

In cases where there is an anticipated strike or slowdown, agencies must notify the student's faculty adviser immediately. When social work staff is involved in a strike against the agency, students are withdrawn for the duration of the strike. Students are not expected to cross picket lines. The University assumes neutrality. The faculty adviser will be available for consultation in these instances and assumes responsibility for providing the field practicum experience.

## Malpractice Insurance

The University provides liability insurance for its students during their field work. The insurance covers claims alleging negligent acts of

students that result in harm to clients/client systems served. The policy has an applicable limit of \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$3,000,000 aggregate for each student in field. The insurance is in effect only during the term period of the student's field practicum experience at the designated agency site. A certificate of insurance may be provided to the agency site upon request.

## Qualifications and Requirements for Field Instructors

Prospective field instructors must be graduates of accredited schools of social work, with at least two years of post-master's practice in a social service agency. In recommending a field instructor, agencies attest to the supervisor's ability to impart the knowledge and values of the profession of social work.

Supervisors new to field education must attend a course called Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI). SIFI is a mandatory course given without charge. Field instructors who have completed the SIFI course at another social work program in the New York City metropolitan area need not take it again. The purpose of SIFI is to provide new field instructors with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively meet their educational responsibilities as teachers of social work students.

## Role and Responsibilities of the Field Instructor

The field instructor is a professional role model for the student. The field instructor conveys specific and general areas of knowledge and skill, provides a stimulus for the student's systematic and reflective thinking about social work theory and practice, and serves as a source of control and direction. The special kind of educational relationship that is established in this tutorial encounter is crucial for the learner.

Field instructors relate not only to the specific practice or methodological orientation of their agency but teach broader concepts by moving out from the specific case to the general professional experience, relating to the theories underpinning practice. This requires skill in moving back and forth from inductive to deductive levels in teaching. Effective field education not only imparts knowledge but encourages the student in the independent use and testing of the various content areas of the academic curriculum, sets clear goals, and fosters a systematic progression in learning related to the student's individual learning needs.

Prior to the student's arrival at the agency, the field instructor should prepare using the information obtained from the school so that there may be appropriate initial activity through which the student's normal anxiety and insecurity will be lessened. In addition, the student needs to feel that he/she is part of the staff and has something to contribute to the agency.

In order to facilitate the introduction of the student to the agency and to professional practice, the student should be given some general idea of the function and structure of the agency very early. More extensive information on the policies and the functions of the agency and of other agencies and community resources can be given in relation to the student's individual assignments since it is recognized that the student learns this best in relation to particular situations. The initial interview students have with a potential supervisor provides an opportunity for the student to learn about the agency and the department they may be interning in. They should use this opportunity to ask questions about both the agency and the type of work they would be doing if they were to be an intern there.

There are times when supervisors assign students to special projects that are part of another program or department as part of their learning experience. It may be necessary then to assign another supervisor to help the student with this task. There are other times, such as when the field instructor might be absent, that a task supervisor should be assigned to the student. The task supervisor consults with the student's field supervisor as to learning needs and progress. The primary responsibility for the student's learning remains with the field instructor.

The field instructor needs to schedule a minimum of one to one-and-one-half hours per week on a regular basis for individual conferences with each student. Conference periods may be divided into two sessions if necessary. This time should be safeguarded so as not to allow interruptions. During the first few weeks that the student is in the agency, the field instructor should be accessible to the student for brief periods outside scheduled conference time, but this should not take the place of the individual conference. The time given by the field instructor for selecting assignments, reading student's records, or planning for students should be outside of individual conference periods.

Student conference periods should be planned for, and prepared for by both the student and the field instructor so that each may have the stimulation and responsibility of participating. The student should prepare recordings sufficiently in advance of the conference period to enable the field instructor to read the material. The conference can then be focused on the student's thinking and understanding and on planning the next steps. It is essential for sound learning that each keep notes of conferences in order to link thinking and planning from one conference to the next and to provide a base for the formal evaluation.

The field instructor's teaching should be focused on specific situations and consciously correlated with appropriate principles and concepts so that the student is helped to integrate theory and practice. Criticism should be given constructively and in the amount that the student can assimilate. The focus should be kept upon the case material so the student may understand the relevancy of the criticism and not personalize it. Thus the field instructor may suggest better use of self in the helping process without damaging the student's self-confidence. In this way, the students will be helped to develop a professional self and to feel free to look at their own attitudes and feelings as they affect their work. Students may have problems in relation to understanding and accepting themselves as a social worker. The field instructor is expected to help with this professional identification.