



School of Social Work

# BSW Field Manual

Academic Year 2023-2024

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# **FIELD EDUCATION**

## **Introduction**

Field education is an essential component of the full educational program offered by the School of Social Work. In field education, students have the opportunity to apply concepts and skills and to test their own abilities to work ethically and effectively with people who are seeking social work help.

The partnership between the School and the agency is a natural and necessary characteristic of field education. The field education agency provides a microcosm of the profession at work. The resources of agencies, including line staff, supervisors and administrators, provide critical components of the educational process.

The program could not proceed without the involvement of students with the agency and with the people the agency serves. Here students observe a group of seasoned professionals going about their tasks: the field instructor models the attitudes, behaviors and skills expected of the competent professional; the agency's programs reflect important social policies and issues whose analysis, implementation or change are important aspects of the student's learning. In addition, the operation and management of the agency provide important insights and understandings about the administration of social services.

Concurrently, the School contributes to the agency's goals and ongoing operation. The faculty's knowledge and skill and the scholarship produced by the faculty are offered for the improvement of services. The presence of students in the agency illustrates the promise for the future and the possibilities inherent in education. Taken all together - the agency, the field instructor, the faculty and the student - are the incorporation of a comprehensive educational experience.

This field manual represents the School's effort to clarify the components of the School: its mission, policies, objectives, curriculum as well as the vital components of field education in the BSW program. It is hoped that the manual will assist all those involved in field education to carry out their respective roles.

The School, including faculty and students, are grateful to the agencies who so willingly share in the education of future generations of social work practitioners.

Diane Hodge, PhD, Director, School of Social Work

Sarah Rakes, PhD, BSW Coordinator

Diana Joyce, MSW, Interim Field Coordinator

## **Field Education Program**

The field experience is an integral part of the Social Work Program. It is a special kind of learning experience which complements and “gives life” to classroom learning. It gives the students the opportunity to learn about people, about social problems, about service delivery systems, about helping, and about the student as a helping professional. Students are placed in an agency to experience educationally directed experiences through which they can translate the knowledge, values, and skills acquired throughout the curriculum into professional practice with clients. The field instructor, task supervisor (if applicable) and the university faculty field liaison and seminar instructor closely collaborate to achieve this in the field instruction program. This is done through a semester long internship within a local human service agency. Students are able to observe and work directly with professionally trained agency workers and field instructors, educated social workers, within the context of generalist social work practice.

Social work seniors are required to successfully complete a 400-hour internship during their final semester, either in the Spring or Summer semester. This is done through 15 weeks of the spring semester, interning about 29 hours per week or through 11 weeks of the summer semester, interning about 37 hours per week. This is the SOWK 489 course. Students are also expected to complete a 3-credit hour senior seminar class (SOWK 490) that is a co-requisite of the SOWK 489 course. Students must successfully complete (pass) both SOWK 489 and 490 in order to successfully complete the field sequence requirement.

The precise scheduling of hours (days, evenings, weekends) may vary according to the agency needs, clients’ schedules, and opportunities for student learning experiences. This is arranged between the student and the agency field instructor/task supervisor. In this process, the student works closely with the university faculty field liaison and seminar instructor. Both are social work faculty members who provide leadership in the weekly seminar, visit the field site, and work cooperatively with the field instructor/task supervisor to maximize the student’s learning experience. The field instructor/task supervisor is the individual in the agency who provides the direct supervision of the student’s experiences and at least one hour per week supervision. If the agency does not have a field instructor on-site, a task supervisor at the agency provides the day-to-day supervision, with the field instructor supplementing the experience with one hour a week of supervision.

## **Admission to Field**

Students majoring in social work participate in a minimum of 400 hours of direct practice in an actual human service agency. This is considered the highlight of the program and occurs through one internship under the supervision of a trained professional social worker or other human services staff. The internship opportunity occurs during the professional social work phase for 400 hours, along with a one-hour weekly seminar, for an entire semester (Spring or Summer) during the senior year. An application is required for admission into both courses. Once the application is completed, it is to be turned into the Coordinator of Field Education. An interview will then be conducted with each student to better determine his or her placement options. These experiences foster the integration of empirical and practice-based knowledge and promote the development of the student’s professional competence in the area of generalist social work practice.

## FIELD POLICIES

### Admission to Field Instruction Program

To be eligible for field instruction, a student must:

1. Complete all coursework required for the social work major, except SOWK 489 and SOWK 490.
2. Possess a GPA of 2.8 in social work courses and overall GPA of 2.7.
3. Have no unresolved concerns regarding professional behavior, as outlined in the Waldron College Standards of Professional Practice Education.
4. Have access to transportation to and from field agency.

**To be eligible to apply for field instruction, a student must have a GPA of 2.8 in social work courses and overall GPA of 2.7.**

### Field Instruction Placement

Initial planning for the senior field experience begins with the student's admission to the School of Social Work.

1. Student completes a Field Placement Application and other required documentation. This information is uploaded to the D2L class that has been designated for the particular field cohort one semester prior to placement. Applications and other documents are found in the D2L class and on the School of Social Work's website (under Field Program). If a student plans to submit an employment based proposal, the cover form available on D2L and the website, must be accompanied with the field application.  
<http://www.radford.edu/content/wchs/home/social-work/academic-programs/field-program.html>

**Spring placement – Due first day of fall semester**

**Summer placement – Due first day of spring semester**

2. The student is interviewed by the Field Coordinator to discuss the field placement process, required documents and forms and future deadlines. Discussion about internship sites available that will maximize the learning experience for the student.
3. Student attends the Field Internship Fair to talk with agencies about internship opportunities. Once a match has been made, the student is contacted regarding the future process, (Additional interview, nothing additional, etc.) Should an interview be requested by the agency, upon receipt of contact information for the agency, the student is to make contact and schedule an interview within 3 business days. **At their discretion, some agencies may offer employment or paid internships while participating in the field fair. The only paperwork that is required by the School of Social Work is a letter of approval.**
4. Should the student be interviewed by an agency representative, by the close of that business day following the interview, the student is to make contact with the Field Coordinator to indicate their interest in continuing to explore an internship opportunity with the agency. (Agencies may reject a student if there is not a mutually agreeable fit.)

5. If the student and the agency agree to the placement, the student is officially placed at the agency. Upon notification of the placement, the student must contact the agency to determine any additional requirements set forth by the placement agency, i.e. fingerprints, drug screens, background check, immunizations. If the student and the agency do not agree to the placement, the matter is referred to the Field Coordinator.
6. The student is assigned to an agency Field Instructor (and Task Supervisor, if applicable).
7. Student applies for and purchases liability insurance in the amount of \$1 million/\$3 million.
8. Student purchases LiveText membership.

### **Student Field Placement Interview Policy**

Every student will be offered the opportunity to interview with a field placement agency, or attend the Internship Fair and/or individually. If the Field Coordinator, in consultation with the field agency(ies), determines this interview is not successful, the student will be granted a second interview at a second agency. However, the Field Coordinator may refer the student for advising to develop a remediation plan before this second interview. If the second interview is determined unsuccessful by the Field Coordinator, in consultation with the field agency, then the student will be referred to the Field Committee. Failure to successfully interview a second time may result in a recommendation of dismissal from the BSW/MSW program and will be referred to the BSW/MSW Committee for further action.

If the student is offered a placement by the agency after the field interview, then the student must accept the placement. If the placement is deemed appropriate by the Field Coordinator and the student does not accept the placement then this is considered a disrupted placement. Refer to Field Placement Disruption policy.

### **Communication**

The relationship between the student, field instructor (and task supervisor, if applicable), and the faculty field liaison, is highly valued while the student is an intern. The assigned field instructor provides learning opportunities that are unique to the field in that particular agency setting. Should the relationship between the student and field instructor (or task supervisor, if applicable) become troublesome, it is the student's responsibility to follow the process outlined below.

1. Student should address their concern directly to the field instructor or task supervisor of concern as soon as possible.
2. If the student does not believe they can have a conversation to express their concern(s), the student is to contact the faculty field liaison immediately. One example of a situation where the student should not approach the field instructor (or task supervisor) directly would be if that person were sexually harassing the student.
3. If the situation cannot be resolved or there are concerns that need to be brought to the Field Coordinator, the faculty field liaison contacts the Field Coordinator. If the student does not believe their concerns have been addressed through the previous two steps, the student can contact the Field Coordinator to schedule a meeting.
4. The Field Coordinator, in consultation with the faculty field liaison and the School of Social Work Administrative Team or the Field Committee, determines a resolution to the identified concern(s).
5. The student must follow the steps outlined above. If at any point the resolution is not satisfactory, the student should initiate the next step in the above process. After

all the above options have been exhausted, the student may contact the Director of Social Work if they believe the resolution to be unsatisfactory.

### **Field Placement Disruption**

A failed field placement is defined as being asked to leave a field placement. If a student is asked to leave a field placement, the student will meet with the Field Committee. The field committee may impose the following consequences: referral to the BSW Committee for recommendation of dismissal from the BSW program, granting of a second placement at a second agency at the next regular field scheduling cycle and/or referral of the student to his/her advisor to develop a remediation plan within 10 classroom days. A second failed field placement will result in a recommendation of dismissal from the BSW program and will be referred to the BSW Committee for further action.

### **Safety in the Agency**

The School of Social Work values student interns and our community agency internship partners. Of paramount concern, the School of Social Work believes that all students should be safe in their internship/internship community. We believe the perspective of students, agency personnel, and the School of Social Work, makes for a valuable and rich learning experience. If a student, agency representative, or representative of the School of Social Work feels a student's placement is unsafe, anyone can initiate the process to ascertain any safety issues/concerns about the agency.

Process:

1. Should a student not feel safe at their internship or while carrying out internship duties, the student is encouraged to voice safety concerns immediately to the Field Instructor, the Task Supervisor (if applicable), and to the Faculty Field Liaison. If the concern is sexual harassment by Field Instructor or Task Supervisor, the student should take their concerns directly to the Faculty Field Liaison and to the Radford University Title IX office.
2. The Student, the Field Instructor (unless Field Instructor/Task Supervisor is the issue), the Task Supervisor (if applicable), and Faculty Field Liaison discuss concerns with all parties, regardless of the source of the perceived safety issue.
3. If the problem cannot be resolved, the Faculty Field Liaison contacts the Field Coordinator, who conducts, or designates someone from the School of Social Work to conduct a formal investigation into the safety issues/concerns.
4. The Field Coordinator, in consultation with the Faculty Field Liaison and the School of Social Work Administrative Team and/or the Field Committee, determines whether the student is to be released from the placement. If the student is not released from the placement, the Faculty Field Liaison, the student, the Field Instructor and Task Supervisor (if applicable), are expected to continue problem-solving until the situation is resolved.

Should the issue be taken before the Field Committee, the student will need to attend the Field Committee meeting to provide details of safety issues/concerns. Prior to this meeting, the student may submit a written response outlining the safety issues/concerns. The Field Coordinator may request additional information from the agency.

At least five classroom days before a Field Committee Meeting, the Field Coordinator will inform the student, advisor, Field Committee members, and any other relevant parties of the date and time of the meeting. The Field Coordinator serves as Chair of this meeting. The

student may elect to have present a faculty advisor, who may privately counsel the student but may not address the Committee or question witnesses. No party may be represented by legal counsel at these proceedings. Only individuals having direct knowledge of the alleged safety violation(s) may appear

before the Committee. Members of the Committee must be present at the hearing in order to vote. A student will be released from the placement if a majority of voting members vote in favor of doing so.

5. If the student is released from the placement, the Field Coordinator notifies the Field Instructor and any other agency personnel. The Field Coordinator discusses other options with the student. Issues are documented in the agency record. The School of Social Work Field Office will not place another student at that agency location until reasonable efforts have been made to resolve the safety issue/concern.

6. The Field Office and the student will work together to begin the process of securing placement at a second agency. The student may be able to resume accruing field hours.

**\*\*In all circumstances, the Field Coordinator should be advised of any issues or problems in field.**

### **Criminal Background Policy**

Field placement agencies may require students to obtain a criminal background check, DMV record check, credit report, drug screen and/or require certain medical screenings (e.g.; Tuberculosis). Students are responsible for obtaining and providing the documents to the agency prior to starting the placement. Students are encouraged to be completely honest and open about this information with agencies from the beginning, starting at interviews. Any legal issues reported on your record may impact your ability to participate in an internship and is **not** the responsibility of the field office. The field office will make every effort to find you a placement, but we will not be held liable if a placement cannot be made due to a criminal background. A criminal history can also impact the becoming licensed in the future. Radford University School of Social Work is not responsible for decisions made by the licensing board, neither can we predict what a licensing board will decide in regards to criminal history.

### **Transportation**

Each student is responsible for providing his/her own transportation to meet the requirements of an internship. Internships may be up to 90 miles from campus.

### **Distance Placements**

Field Placements are located within a 90-mile radius of a student's primary RU campus, Roanoke or Radford. Requests for placement outside of the 90-mile radius require the student find their own placement and submit a petition to the field committee one semester prior to the start of the field placement. This petition will be presented to the Field Committee that will make the final decision regarding the approval/disapproval of the petition. In addition to meeting requirements for field placement agencies, the agency field instructor must have access and willingness to use various forms of distance technology. Students are required to attend field seminar meetings face to face.

### **Schedule of Field Experience**

The student is expected to intern full-time at the agency for an academic semester for 400 hours. The precise scheduling of hours (days, evenings, weekends) may vary according to

the agency needs, client's schedules, and opportunities for student learning experiences. This is arranged between the student and the field instructor/task supervisor. **Any exceptions to this block placement must be approved by the student's Academic Advisor, Field Coordinator, and BSW Program Coordinator.** The student participates in field instruction seminars held at the main campus or extended campus during the course of the field placement. These seminars include an orientation on the first day of the semester and weekly three-hour seminars. Summer semester, the orientation is held before the semester and the seminar is a weekly four-hour class.

### **Dress Code**

Students must inquire and follow the agency dress code. As a representative of RU School of Social Work, it is important to present oneself professionally, especially in appearance and attire. Dress in a way that the attention is on the client and not on you.

### **Field Hours**

BSW students are expected to begin accruing field hours, which can include orientations, meetings, establishing their internship schedule, etc., during the first four class days of the start of the semester in which they are enrolled in SOWK 489. If a student does not meet this expectation to accrue hours in the first four days, the student is encouraged to drop SOWK 489 and 490 by the add/drop deadline.

The required field hours must be completed over the course of the 15-week semester (11-week Summer III semester). Typically, field hours will be accrued during the normal business hours of 8-5. Students may not begin their internship early; students must begin at the start of the semester. Should orientation to the agency be required prior to the start of the semester, the student must receive approval from the field office. Any accrual of field hours prior to the start of the semester must be approved by the field office. Students must intern at their placement for the duration of the semester even if this results in accruing more hours than required for the internship. With approval from the agency, the field instructor and the field office, students may minimally complete hours during 13 weeks of a 15-week semester or 10 weeks of an 11-week semester. If the agency or student requires any variation to this procedure, the student and field instructor must discuss this necessary change with the faculty field liaison and it must be approved beforehand. The learning agreement should reflect any approved change. All paperwork must be completed and the student must have attended an orientation prior to beginning the internship. Daily field hours will be completed and approved electronically in the LiveText system. Students must select a category (QMHP-A, QMHP-C, or other) when recording hours in LiveText.

### **Internship and Related Travel**

In consultation with the field instructor/task supervisor and field liaison, any non-routine travel related to the internship can be counted as field hours, up to 8 hours per semester.

### **Absence from Field Placement**

There may be times when a student misses a regular scheduled field time due to illness or special situations. This time must be made up. Making up this time is to be arranged between the student and field instructor/task supervisor.

### **Holidays**

Field agencies honor Radford University holidays as indicated by the academic calendar. Exceptions to these are by mutual agreement between the student and field instructor/task supervisor prior to the beginning of the field placement. Arrangements for continuing of client services for which the student is responsible are worked out between the student and

the field instructor/task supervisor. This agreement must be included in the learning agreement.

### **Liability Insurance**

All students enrolled in the field education program at Radford University are required to carry personal liability insurance in the amount of 1 million/3 million, coverage dates must include the dates of the internship. Please see website, <http://www.radford.edu/content/wchs/home/social-work/academic-programs/field-program.html>, for liability insurance resources. Students are responsible to submit a copy of individual liability coverage to the field office prior to the end of fall semester (Spring) and prior to the end of spring semester (Summer). If an employment-based practicum has been approved for the student, while in the role of a student at the agency, the student MUST have individual liability insurance in their name. Students cannot be a part of group coverage.

### **Student Confidentiality Waiver**

The School of Social Work has adopted a Student Confidentiality Waiver. The field placement is a vital component of your social work education, and every effort possible must be made to match each student with the most appropriate placement. As such, each student should carefully read the waiver and sign it to assist the School in ensuring that any potential problems with field placements may be avoided. See form on website, <http://www.radford.edu/content/wchs/home/social-work/academic-programs/field-program.html>. This signed waiver is due as part of the application to field and the deadline is given in the D2L class.

### **The Calendar**

Students will negotiate holidays with the field agency prior to the beginning of the field placement. This agreement must be included in the learning agreement.

Students must complete all field hours over 15 weeks of the spring semester or over 11 weeks of the summer semester. Exceptions might be granted for rare circumstances and on a case-by-case basis. Any exception to a 15 week or 11-week internship must be approved by the Field Coordinator.

### **Assigning Grades/Attending Seminars**

The seminar instructor teaching the field seminar will assign the grade for SOWK 490. Seminar attendance and performance will enter into the grading process. Seminars must meet weekly for 3 hours in face-to-face format (4 hours in face-to-face format in summer). Case presentations will be incorporated into the seminar. Students are expected to attend all seminar sessions. The faculty field liaison, after consulting with the field instructor, will assign the grade for SOWK 489. Students must complete all of the hours required for field. These hours will not include time spent in seminar. Student must receive a passing grade in both SOWK 489 and 490 to successfully complete SOWK 489 and 490.

In extreme situations, a grade of incomplete may be awarded at the sole discretion of the Faculty Field Liaison and will require documentation of the circumstances warranting the incomplete grade (see below).

If internship hours are not completed over the semester, within 15 days before the end of the semester, the student will submit documentation to be reviewed by the field committee. This document should contain the following:

- reason(s) why the student was not able to complete the hours within the semester,
- documented plan to complete all hours,

- how many hours the student will intern per week,
- what activities the student will work on while completing the hours and
- the date when hours will be completed.

Support of this plan will be obtained from the field instructor (and task supervisor if applicable) by their signature on this document prior to submission. If this plan is not submitted to the field committee for approval, any hours accrued past the semester will not be approved by the School of Social Work, which will result in a failing grade.

If the student receives a grade of incomplete for a semester and the Faculty Field Liaison is not available to continue to provide oversight to the student and field placement, the Field Coordinator will assume the role of Faculty Field Liaison.

### **Supervision**

A Field Instructor should be regularly accessible within the agency where the student is placed. If the immediate agency supervisor does not hold a social work degree, then another person with social work credentials will be asked to provide social work supervision. Supervisory conferences should last at least one hour and be scheduled on a weekly basis. Learning is enhanced when supervision is frequent and consistent. During the field orientation prior to the field placement, the student will receive information on the supervisory process. This will include: getting the most out of supervision requires that you know what supervision is, how to use the supervisory relationship, and what specific actions on your part facilitate effective supervision.

Approval of the proposed Field Instructor rests with the School of Social Work. The minimum requirements for serving as a Field instructor for a BSW student is to hold a BSW degree from an accredited institution and two years of post-BSW practice experience.

If a qualified Field Instructor is not available in the agency, a Task Supervisor is identified to work with the student in the agency and the School of Social Work, in collaboration with the agency and the student, approves a qualified Field Instructor to provide the weekly educational supervision.

BSW students in their final placement may participate in weekly social work group supervision but individual weekly social work supervision must be provided a minimum of two times per semester.

### **Documentation**

The student is responsible for making copies of all field information submitted to the Faculty Field Liaison and to the Field Coordinator for their own use. Most documentation will be accessible to the student through the LiveText system. The School of Social Work will not provide copies of any documentation and student files are purged after 5 years of graduation. Student must submit all required original paperwork electronically.

QMHP Verification Form must be completed by student and submitted to field liaison for signature of Director. Signed QMHP Verification form will be emailed to student to upload to LiveText.

### **Eligibility of Field Instructor/Task Supervisor**

An eligible field instructor/task supervisor cannot be a current student in the School of Social Work of Radford University. The eligible field instructor/task supervisor cannot have provided field instruction/supervision to the student in previous internships. For each

internship, students must have a different field instructor/task supervisor.

### **Field Instruction with Current or Former Employer**

It is the expectation of the School of Social Work that students complete field practicum in new settings. However, in special circumstances, an option to have an Employment-Based Field Practicum is available. The practicum must be educationally focused, and must meet the educational objectives of the BSW curriculum. The intended goal of an employment based practicum is to allow the student to continue employment while completing an educationally appropriate field practicum supervised by a BSW/MSW practitioner.

Exclusions from Employment-Based Placement include:

- Agencies that are very small or are highly-specialized private practice settings;
- Agencies owned and/or operated by student's relatives (marriage or birth);
- Students who are in a position of authority (CEO, Director, Owner, Co-owner, etc.) or are self-employed;
- Agencies that have existed for less than 1 year and/or have not yet developed or implemented formal operating policies and procedures; and
- Agencies under investigation or that have been sanctioned for fraudulent or unethical activities.

### **Expectations of Agency:**

- A.** The agency must offer sufficiently diverse educational experiences that will enhance the student's knowledge base and degree of expertise;
- B.** Documentation that the student is not a probationary employee (or that probation has been waived by the agency) or is an employee in good standing.
- C.** The agency administrator must agree that students complete their required field practicum hours and have time to attend classes and field seminars. It is expected that the student discuss and negotiate the required time with their employer.
- D.** Radford University School of Social Work requires all students to purchase individual liability insurance coverage. If the employment based practicum is approved the student must submit proof of student liability insurance distinct from their agency coverage.
- E.** The agency must be affiliated formally with the School of Social Work and agree to provide the student with a Radford University approved agency field instructor. The field instructor must have a BSW/MSW degree from an accredited institution and have two years' postgraduate experience. The assigned field instructor is expected to attend all orientation and scheduled field academy seminars.
- F.** The proposed field instructor is not the student's job supervisor and has a BSW degree plus two years' experience for BSW students. If an approved field instructor is not available, the Field Coordinator will collaborate with the agency to designate an onsite task supervisor and approve an external field instructor to conduct the weekly educational supervision.
- G.** Field assignments in the agency must have an educational focus, must differ significantly from the student's current or past job assignments, and must be in a different (i.e. separate) program area.

### **Expectation of Students:**

*Process*

*(Students must submit written documentation that explicitly addresses the agency expectations)*

1. Student must meet with their advisor to discuss the proposal and submit a completed proposal packet to the field office (**Semester before field begins**). Cover form must be accompanied with field application, <http://www.radford.edu/content/wchs/home/social-work/academic-programs/field-program.html>

BSW (SOWK 489) spring placement  
BSW (SOWK 489) summer placement

First Friday in October  
First Friday in February

It is the student's responsibility to forward the proposal to the Field Coordinator. Due to the amount of mail received during this time, it is advised that all students submitting employment based proposal contact the field coordinator to ensure proper receipt of the proposal.

2. Proposal should contain:
  - A. Completion of PDF form to include a description of the proposed field placement responsibilities and how they demonstrate the achievement of the learning objectives.
  - B. Provide a current job description and the name of the current supervisor.
  - C. Provide field placement job description, completed agency agreement, the name of approved field instructor and completed field instructor sheet with resume'.
  - D. List the difference between the current job and the proposed placement. Students who are using a new job must provide documentation of start date.  
**NEW job is defined as new employment within three months of beginning practicum.**
  - E. Letter of approval from an agency executive responsible for human resource decisions. Should contain the following:
    - i. Agency executive in charge of human resource decisions and the
    - ii. Current supervisor must provide the field office with written documentation approving the employment based field placement.
3. Field Committee will review the proposal and provide the student with a written decision within 30 days.

**The process to coordinate and approve an employment based practicum is lengthy. Please allow time to complete the forms and submit them to the Field Coordinator in a timely manner.**

### **Process to complete employment based proposal**

If a student plans to submit an employment based proposal to the field committee for review, the student must complete and attach the cover sheet to their field application. The *Cover Form for Field Application*, is available on the website, <http://www.radford.edu/content/wchs/home/social-work/academic-programs/field-program.html>

The student must contact his/her advisor to initiate the process and to review required paperwork. At this meeting, the student will be given information as to the specific paperwork that is required, such as the proposal checklist. Prior to submitting the proposal,

the proposal must be reviewed by their advisor. Once the advisor determines the proposal is complete and ready to be submitted, the advisor signs the proposal checklist.

### **Changing Placements**

Field instruction placements continue throughout the semester within the same agency. This is an important professional commitment to the agency and its clients/consumers. Changes are not made as a matter of course and are a potential violation of professional integrity. Should problems arise in the field placement, the following procedures are to be followed:

1. Student is encouraged to voice their concerns immediately to the field instructor and task supervisor (if applicable) and to the faculty field liaison.
2. Student, field instructor and task supervisor (if applicable), and faculty field liaison discuss concerns with all parties, regardless of the source of the perceived or identified problem.
3. If the problem cannot be resolved, the faculty field liaison contacts the Field Coordinator.
4. The Field Coordinator determines, in consultation with the faculty field liaison and the School of Social Work Administrative Team/Field Committee, whether the placement is to be terminated. If the placement is not terminated, the faculty field liaison, the student, the field instructor and task supervisor (if applicable), are expected to continue problem solving until the situation is resolved.
5. If the field placement is terminated, the Field Coordinator discusses other options with the student. The faculty field liaison will then complete the Field Placement Change Request form that is provided on the School of Social Work website, <http://www.radford.edu/content/wchs/home/social-work/academic-programs/field-program.html>. The student, faculty field liaison, field instructor, advisor and Field Coordinator sign the document and then it is entered into the student's academic file. The Field Coordinator may wish to consult with the BSW Coordinator, in working out a resolution to the problem.
6. The Field Coordinator will make at least one further attempt to place the student in a field agency.
7. If a field placement cannot be secured, the matter is referred to the BSW Coordinator and Director for disposition. The decision regarding the student's continuation in field is made by the Director. (See the BSW Student Handbook for Course and Field Review Processes.)

## **FIELD AGENCIES**

### **Selection**

Students in the Field Instruction Program are placed in human service agencies under public or private auspices. Either an agency or the Radford University School of Social Work may initiate the procedures designating an agency as a field instruction site. The Field Coordinator and the agency executive negotiate a working relationship based on the criteria stated below. If a working relationship is successfully negotiated by the Field Coordinator and the agency executive, a written statement of this agreement is sent to the appropriate agency representative. The agreement is signed by the Field Coordinator, the Agency Director (or his/her designated representative), and the Director of the School of Social Work.

## **Criteria**

1. The agency's philosophy, goals, programs, and policies are compatible with professional social work standards.
2. The agency board, administrator, and staff are committed to the field instruction program, its goals and objectives, and due process protection of students as a significant function and responsibility of the agency.
3. The agency is in good standing in the community. It qualifies for membership in those standard setting bodies - national, state and local - appropriate to its field of practice.
4. The agency's staff is large enough to maintain and develop its basic program without reliance on students.
5. The agency administrator and staff are willing to cooperate with the university in planning for supervision and evaluation of placed students.
6. The agency can make available desk space, supplies, telephones, and clerical services for the use of the field instruction student. The agency can make available a qualified field instructor for the placed student.

## **Criteria for Selection of Field Instructors**

Field instructors are chosen on the basis of:

1. Graduate of an accredited School of Social Work with 2 years' post degree experience.
2. Practice competence.
3. Skill in teaching and supervision.
4. Positive approach to social work education.
5. Ability to be creative and imaginative.
6. Ability to relate the student's field experience to academic learning.

A field instructor should be regularly accessible within the agency where the student is placed. If the immediate agency supervisor does not hold a social work degree, then another person with social work credentials will be asked to provide social work supervision. Supervisory conferences should last at least one hour and be scheduled on a weekly basis. Learning is enhanced when supervision is frequent and consistent. During the field orientation prior to the field placement, the student will receive information on the supervisory process. This will include: getting the most out of supervision requires that you know what supervision is, how to use the supervisory relationship, and what specific actions on your part facilitate effective supervision.

Approval of the proposed field instructor rests with the School of Social Work. The minimum requirements for serving as a field instructor are a BSW from an accredited institution and two years of post-BSW practice experience. If a qualified field instructor is not available in the agency, a task supervisor is identified to work with the student in the agency and the School of Social Work, in collaboration with the agency and the student, approves a qualified field instructor to provide the weekly educational supervision. In this case, the supervision is provided by two people, the task supervisor and the field instructor. It is imperative the task supervisor and field instructor have frequent contact regarding the student and the student's learning in the practice setting.

## **Roles and Expectations**

### **Student**

A LiveText membership is required of students enrolled in a field practicum and seminar class as part of the professional education curriculum of the social work program. The field internship experience requires the use of LiveText for submitting evaluations and other documentation. The learning agreement and signed midterm evaluations should be uploaded to the LiveText account. If a student will be interning in an approved employment based internship, the proposal and job descriptions should also be uploaded to the LiveText account.

While the Field Coordinator, the field instructor and the faculty field liaison work to provide a quality field instruction experience for students, the student is expected to fulfill a number of responsibilities falling under two categories: the placement process and the agency experience.

Once the student begins the field placement, the student:

1. Has agency expectations made clear, is prepared for and receives supervision on a regular basis, is actively involved in the social work tasks of the field setting, and participates in the evaluation process.
2. Acts as a mature, professional person at the assigned agency. The NASW Code of Ethics is used as one criterion for determining what is professional conduct.
3. Maintains confidentiality on matters pertaining to clients.
4. Arranges for transportation to and from the agency and, when necessary, arranges for off-campus living accommodations.
5. Negotiates with the agency field instructor a learning agreement at the beginning of the placement.
6. Notifies the agency field instructor, or designee, if the student must be absent from the field placement.
7. Completes all written assignments satisfactorily.
8. Participates in the field placement seminars held at the University.
9. Prepares for and constructively uses supervisory conferences.
10. Arranges with the agency field instructor for the termination or orderly transfer of cases or projects before leaving the agency.

### **Faculty Field Liaison/Seminar Instructor**

The roles and responsibilities of the faculty field liaison and seminar instructor include:

1. Monitoring and assessing agencies, field instructors, and students' learning experiences, including the review and approval of the student's learning agreement;
2. Assisting students with the integration of course work and practicum;
3. Assisting field instructors with developing teaching skills and providing them with course outlines and other materials;
4. Assisting in resolving problems between students and field instructors or other agency issues
5. Meeting with the student and the field instructor a minimum of three times during the academic semester; and
6. Assigning the student a grade. For SOWK 490 based on all work submitted and for SOWK 489 in consultation with the agency field instructor at the end of the semester;
7. Coordinating and facilitating the field placement seminar.

## **The Agency**

The roles and responsibilities of the agency include:

1. Interviews a prospective field student and accepts or rejects a student.
2. Considers the student for placement without respect to race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual preference, age, religion, disability (unless student is not able to function in the agency setting with accommodations), or political belief.
3. Designates a qualified field instructor (and/or task supervisor, if applicable) who has the major responsibility for structuring the student's learning experiences.
4. Provides the field instructor (and/or task supervisor, if applicable) with adequate time to carry out responsibilities to the student.
5. Advises the faculty liaison and/or the Field Coordinator of policy and service changes in the agency.
6. Provides necessary space and facilities (such as telephone, clerical services, and access to client records) for each student.
7. Provides the student with transportation or mileage reimbursement, for field assignments that take the student outside of the agency. If agency policies do not permit this, the student is informed of this before the field assignment is accepted.

## **The Field Instructor**

Current students of the School of Social Work are not eligible to serve as a field instructor.

The roles and responsibilities of the field instructor include:

1. Abide by NASW Code of Ethics and support the Waldron College Standards of Professional Practice and the Radford University Standards of Student Conduct.
2. Cannot be a current student in the School of Social Work of Radford University.
3. Serve as a Field Instructor for any given student a maximum of one placement.
4. Monitor the student's learning experience, ensuring that the experience is educational in nature;
5. Participate in carrying out the educational objectives of the field instruction curriculum;
6. Monitor the development of the Learning Agreement with the student;
7. Provide a range of appropriate practice experiences aimed at the student's professional growth;
8. Provide a minimum of one hour of one-to-one or group supervision per week;
9. Meet with the faculty field liaison a minimum of three times per semester;
10. Engage in telephone consultation when necessary;
11. Provide an orientation for field students;
12. Attend field instruction seminars at the University;
13. Provide input into the ongoing development of the School's curriculum and program;
14. Recommend student's semester grade.
15. Complete required paperwork in a timely manner.

## **The Task Supervisor (if applicable)**

Current students of the School of Social Work are not eligible to serve as a task supervisor.

The roles and responsibilities of the task supervisor include:

1. Abide by NASW Code of Ethics and support the Waldron College Standards of Professional Practice and the Radford University Standards of Student Conduct.
2. Cannot be a current student in the School of Social Work of Radford University.

3. In consultation with Field Instructor, monitor the student's learning experience, ensuring that the experience is educational in nature,
4. Participate in carrying out the educational objectives of the field instruction curriculum,
5. Consult in the development of the learning agreement.
6. In consultation with field instructor, provide a range of appropriate practice experiences aimed at the student's professional growth,
7. In consultation with field instructor, consult with the Faculty Field Liaison a minimum of three times per semester,
8. Engage in telephone consultation when necessary,
9. Provide an orientation for field students,
10. Attend field instruction seminars at the University (CEU's offered)
11. Provide input into the ongoing development of the School's curriculum and program,
12. Complete required paperwork in a timely manner.

## **SUGGESTED FIELD PLACEMENT EXPERIENCES**

Agencies differ from one to another and situations within agencies change, just as students differ and change. The development of a stimulating program by the individual field instructor is the essence of good education. Nevertheless, there are certain types of experiences that should form the foundation of any student's field instruction experiences. The following should be developed by the field instructors in their own settings and in the most meaningful way possible to the student.

1. Orientation:  
The students will be strangers in the agency and will need some orientation. Some advance preparation is helpful, such as prepared desk space, personnel forms, agency literature. The first several days should be structured. There should be introductions to the staff and director. Some familiarity with office procedures should be provided the student. Orientation should be a learning experience in how to become acquainted with all new agencies.
  
2. Development of Professionalism:  
The student needs to know how she/he is to be designated at the agency and how she/he is related to the work of the agency. She/he needs to have a recognized place there and understand the role of the others in the agency. This is the first step toward the development of a professional self.  
  
Next is the development of a professional relationship with the supervisor. She/he needs to understand the nature of their relationship, the purpose and place of supervision, the time scheduled for her/his conferences, and her/his responsibility in making the supervisory experience as meaningful as possible. Confidentiality was learned in the classroom. It should be internalized in the field instruction through working with individuals, groups, and the community. Self-awareness and the conscious use of self should be a significant part of the developing professionalization of the student.
  
3. Interviewing:  
Each student has studied and has experience in interviewing. The field instructor should add to this base by assisting the student to plan, conduct, and evaluate her/his interviews. Field instruction is an educational program and not an apprenticeship, so specific instruction in this area is essential.

4. Developing relationships:  
The development of relationships is a fundamental part of generic social work and experiences should be planned to enhance this ability of the student. As the semester progresses, this experience should extend to experiences that develop professional relationships. The student should be helped to see what such a relationship entails, and that there is a need to demonstrate the beginning professional use of self.
5. Groups:  
The student must have some awareness of the importance of groups and develop some skills in relating to them. The student needs to understand the principles of group dynamics and be able to apply these principles in practice.
6. Community Activities:  
The student needs to understand the relationship of the agency to the total community. Identification of community social problems and other agencies working in the same field is a first step in accomplishing this objective. Attendance at community meetings and participation in planning community change is desired wherever possible.
7. Obtaining information, analyzing situations, and working toward change:  
The students involved in field experience will have taken a variety of courses in the Social Work Program, including Social Welfare and Social Work Practice courses. The field experience should provide them with the opportunity to apply the generic concepts of social work. Reading cases and observing others is an excellent beginning, but the students will need to be involved in actual work with the clients. They need experience in obtaining information, analyzing situations, and planning change. It is essential that all students have experience in assessing and working through problems with individuals, groups, and the community.
8. Summaries, correspondence, and recordings:  
Every student should have experience in recording social work data, summarizing material, and writing letters.
9. Evaluation:  
The student should learn that evaluation and feedback are important in the field of social work. Self-evaluation is an important part of this evaluation process and should be a continuous process. The final evaluation of the student should be a recapitulation of previous developments.

## **THE STUDENT-AGENCY LEARNING AGREEMENT**

The Student-Agency Learning Agreement is an approach to learning in the field instruction program. The agreement is developed jointly by the student and the agency field instructor in the beginning weeks of the field placement and revised periodically. The faculty field liaison/seminar instructor will assist the student in the actual writing of the learning agreement. The purposes are:

1. To facilitate a practice centered and diversified learning experience for the student that fits within the overall goals and programs of the agency.

2. To give the student an opportunity to participate in the planning of the field placement.
3. To ensure that the student understands the agency's expectations of the student.
4. To identify criteria for measuring progress.
5. To facilitate a practice-centered and diversified learning experience for the intern that fits within the overall goals and programs of the agency.
6. To give the intern the opportunity to participate in the planning of the field placement.
7. To ensure that the intern understands the agency's expectations of the student.
8. To identify criteria for measuring progress towards meeting established learning objectives.

### **Guidelines**

The agreement is flexible. It can be changed or adapted as the student's learning opportunities change during the course of the field placement.

Example: It may be agreed that the student will plan and carry out a fundraising project for the agency. In the course of the field placement, circumstances make this impossible. The agreement, then, is accordingly revised or adapted.

### **Process**

The learning agreement template can be found on the School of Social Work website (under Field Program). The following information should be considered as you complete the learning agreement template. Each intern will develop a learning agreement around the nine given competencies. The agreement will contain 3-5 measurable, dated, tasks for each competency, and evaluation of the tasks. The student, field instructor, task supervisor (if applicable), and faculty field liaison will sign the learning agreement, which will be submitted by the student.

As part of the learning agreement, the student will be expected to complete an additional plan related to safety in the agency.

- A. The first column of the template is a list of the practice behaviors. These correspond to the evaluation and cannot be modified.
- B. The middle column should include a description of the tasks and assignments that the student will do in carrying out the educational objectives. (what will you do and how will you do it?)
- C. The last column should identify methods to be used for evaluation of student's performance (how will you know you have successfully completed the task?), which is either discuss with supervisor or other (e.g. process recording, video/audio tapes, analysis of student documents, direct observation, client feedback, co-worker evaluations).

Example: Competency #5: Engage in Policy Practice

Task: By specific date, the student will be able to identify social policy at the local, state and federal level and how this impacts the delivery of services at the internship agency.

Evaluation: Check box, Will discuss with Supervisor.

## **FIELD EVALUATION PROCESS**

Evaluations are an integral part of student learning. Ongoing evaluation of a student's progress in field is essential to analytical development and self-growth. It is encouraged that each student undergoes continuous evaluation of their own professional skills and educational integration of coursework into the field setting. Therefore, a formal midterm and final evaluation process is to be done. Midterm and final evaluations are completed by both the student and the agency field instructor, on separate forms. This is an opportunity for the student and field instructor to engage in further dialogue as to the student's adjustment to the practicum setting, their emerging strengths, and any limitations or concerns regarding student's performance.

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