



Engagement • Discovery • Integration • Transformation

# FIELD EDUCATION PROGRAM MANUAL

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**2018 - 2019**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

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This manual is for informational purposes only and is not an official publication of The University of Southern Mississippi. For official University rules and regulations, please refer to the bulletins which can be obtained from the Registrar, <http://www.usm.edu/registrar>.

## **PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL**

The purpose of this manual is to describe the structures, goals and expectations, the roles and responsibilities, and the policies and procedures that form the basis for, and guide Field Education, an integral part of the USM School of Social Work curriculum. It is intended to assist students, faculty, staff, field liaisons, and field instructors in clarifying, coordinating, and implementing the various aspects of the field instruction process. Field Education is an educationally directed program offering students opportunities to integrate their practice skills with the knowledge, values and skills they have acquired in their academic classes. Field education is social work's signature pedagogy that allows students to develop professional skills while working in a social work agency under the supervision of a social worker that serves as their field instructor. We believe that internships are intended to be "magical environments"<sup>1</sup> that are safe and supportive places where students develop their skills and learn about the practice traditions of social work as a profession. Field is that place where what students have been taught in the classroom is developed into demonstrable behaviors that make up their new professional personas.

<sup>1</sup> Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

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## **UNIVERSITY NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY**

The University of Southern Mississippi offers to all persons equal access to educational, programmatic and employment opportunities without regard to age, sex, sexual orientation, religion, color, national origin, Vietnam era veteran status or disability status. These provisions are pursuant to applicable federal and state regulations. Inquiries concerning discrimination should be directed to the following:

Office of Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity

McLemore Hall (MCL) 310

118 College Drive #5168

Hattiesburg, MS 39406

Phone: 601.266.6618

Fax and TTY: (601) 266-4167

(601) 266-6344

<http://www.usm.edu/aa-eeo>

## **UNIVERSITY DISABILITY ACCOMODATIONS**

If a student has a disability that qualifies under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she should contact the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by ADA may include learning, psychiatric, physical disabilities, or chronic health disorders. Students can contact ODA if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies.

The University of Southern Mississippi

Office for Disability Accommodations

118 College Drive #8586

Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

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<http://www.usm.edu/oda>







## **THE PURPOSE OF FIELD**

The field practicum is guided by a number of important principles pertaining to social work education. Knowledge, values, and skills first defined and learned in the classroom are reinforced and refined through professionally supervised practice. Curriculum content areas are, further, most effectively and most fully absorbed under conditions of planned and supervised integration and synthesis. Undergraduate and graduate students alike bring with them to the field practicum varied social, cultural, educational, and experiential qualities, about which they must become critically aware if they are to flourish as competent and effective practitioners following graduation. Educational opportunities and resources provided by field instruction must, moreover, address the promotion of social justice and institutional change, as well as the enhancement of social functioning of individuals, groups, organizations, and communities. Our field practica also provide students with an initiation into the traditions of the social work profession and the practice of the social work community. It provides students an intermediate space (Schon, 1987) between the “real” practice world and the academy. In this place they can learn particular ways of seeing, thinking, and doing that are consistent with social work practice and increase their professional social work confidence.

The educational activities that support the field component of the curriculum are the responsibility of the Field Education Office. A key element for the field program is the interaction between the community-based field sites and the field liaisons that monitor the students’ progress in their placements. Approximately 225 social service agencies serve the Field Education Office by providing diverse placement sites and day-to-day field teaching and supervision by qualified and trained field instructors. These agencies are a critical component of the field curriculum and carry a large share of responsibility for the education of students in the field.

## **THE FIELD EDUCATION OFFICE**

The Field Education Office serves both the undergraduate and graduate programs. A full time Field Education Coordinator manages all aspects of field placement and serves on the school’s administrative team. Rounding out the field office are field placement specialists and field education specialist.

The responsibilities of this team include the following:

1. Assign students to field placements.

2. Review agency and field instructor applications.
3. Obtain and renew agency affiliation agreements.
4. Ensure compliance with Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) educational policy and accreditation standards (EPAS) requirements.
5. Consult with faculty, students, field instructors, field liaisons, and agency administrators regarding field policies and procedures.
6. Conduct on-going evaluation of the field curriculum.
7. Provide field instructor training on the school's curriculum, field supervision, practice behaviors, and other relevant content.

### **Responsibilities of the Field Education Coordinator**

1. Recruit and assess social service agencies as field instruction sites;
2. Establish and maintain cooperative relationships between the School and social service agencies;
3. Consult with agency administrative personnel on matters involving the provision of adequate field instruction, selection and training of field instructors and maintenance of field instruction standards;
4. Interpret the School's mission, goals, objectives, and philosophy of education and field education standards to the community and community agencies;
5. Develop seminars and staff development experiences for field agencies and field instructors;
6. Provide training for field instructors
7. Approve assignment of students to specific agencies following consultation with students, advisors, field office personnel, and field instructors;
8. Consultation with field office personnel, advisors, field instructors and students in situations involving student performance concerns; and,
9. Function as a field liaison for designated geographical areas.

### **Responsibilities of the Field Placement Specialists**

1. Assist with student interviews and placement activities as needed
2. Assist with agency and field instructor recruitment
3. Initiate contact with the field instructor and the student

4. Make at least one agency contact during the semester via face-to-face visit, skype, or conference call.
5. Assess and monitor the quality of supervision provided to the student
6. To be available to the Field Instructor and the student to deal with problems that may occur during the course of the placement
7. Mediate if problems arise between students and field instructor or between student and other agency staff
8. Participate in field instructors' meetings planned by the School
9. Provide training for field instructors

#### **Responsibilities of the Field Education Specialists**

1. Maintain all records pertaining to agencies, field instructors, and students;
2. Facilitate communication to students, agencies, field instructors, and faculty;
3. Maintain current information on agencies approved as field instruction sites;
4. Assist with preparation for field instructor training and field-related workshops; and,
5. Assist with field interviews as needed.
6. Assist with placing students

#### **Responsibilities of the Field Classroom Instructor**

1. Facilitate discussion/activities to promote integration of classroom learning and practice.
2. Review and sign the orientation checklist
3. Communicate with the field liaison
4. Notify field office personnel of any problems or issues in field that have been reported in class or concerns with performance or number of hours worked
5. Monitor documentation in TK20
6. Review and sign the learning plan
7. Review and sign the mid-semester evaluation

8. Review and sign the end-of-semester evaluation Provide training for field instructors

## FIELD COURSES

### BSW Program

Undergraduate students enroll in SWK 430, Field Education, and SWK 431, Field Seminar, during their final semester. Students in SWK 430 must complete a minimum of 450 hours by attending field placement 32 hours per week.

SWK 430. Field Education (9 hrs.) Prerequisites: Must have completed the required university general education curriculum, the social work core, and the professional foundation. The student must have at least a 2.5 cumulative GPA. Co-requisite: SWK 431. This internship in a social service agency provides experience in direct service to client systems and enhances and develops generalist practice skills. This course is the only one in the social work curriculum where students earn a Pass/Fail grade.

SWK 431. Field Seminar (3 hrs) Co-requisite: SWK 430. The seminar enables students to further develop generalist practice skills and integrate professional knowledge, values, skills and theory with practice.

Please refer to the Undergraduate Bulletin and the BSW Program Handbook for more detailed information on courses and degree plans.

### MSW Program

Graduate students' field courses depend on the students' curriculum plans : full time, part time, or advanced standing. All graduate students must complete 900 field hours in order to graduate. Advanced standing students must provide documentation of undergraduate field hours that will be used toward the 900 required hours.

<b>FULL TIME STUDENTS</b>	<b>First Year Field</b>	<b>Co-requisites</b>
	<u>SWK 659.</u> (2 hrs.) Full Time Field Education I. Students attend field placement three days per week. Students attend biweekly group sessions that process field experiences to assist with developing a professional identity. Students should complete a minimum of 300 field hours.	<u>SWK 604.</u> (1 hr.) Professional Development II. This intensive orientation to field takes place during the first week of the semester.  <u>SWKS 615.</u> (2 hrs.) Integrated Seminar II
	<b>Second Year and Full Time Advanced Standing</b>	<b>Co-requisites</b>
	<u>SWK 661.</u> (2 hrs.) Full Time Field Education II. Students begin field at a	<u>SWK 616.</u> (2 hrs.) Integrated Seminar III

different agency, attending three days per week.	
<u>SWK 662.</u> (2 hrs.) Full Time Field Education III. Students continue at the same agency as SWK 661, attending three days per week.	<u>SWK 647.</u> (2 hrs.) Integrated Seminar IV.

**First Year**

SWK 626. (1 hr.) Part Time Field Education I. Students attend field placement two days per week. Students attend field placement three days per week. Students attend biweekly group sessions that process field experiences to assist with developing a professional identity

SWK 627. (1 hr.) Part Time Field Education II. In the semester following SWK 626, students continue at same agency for two days each week. Students continue to attend field placement three days per week. Students attend biweekly group sessions.

By the end of SWK 626 and SWK 627, students need to have accumulated a total of 450 field hours.

**Second Year and Part Time Advanced Standing**

SWK 641. (2 hrs.) Part Time Field Education III

Students attend a new field placement two days each week.

SWK 642. (2 hrs.) Part Time Field Education IV

Students attend a new field placement two days each week.

By the end of SWK 641 and SWK 642, students need to have a total of 450 hours.

**Co-requisites**

SWK 604. (1 hr.) Professional Development II. This intensive orientation to field takes place during the first week of the semester.

SWKS 615. (2 hrs.) Integrated Seminar II

**Co-requisites**

SWK 616. (2 hrs.) Integrated Seminar III

SWK 647. (2 hrs.) Integrated Seminar IV.

Please refer to the Graduate Bulletin and the MSW Program Handbook for more information on courses and degree plans.

### **Advanced Standing**

Students with a BSW degree and meeting all admission requirements may matriculate into the MSW program in the second year. Students are required to provide proof of the number of hours successfully completed for undergraduate field. The undergraduate hours and the graduate hours must total a minimum of 900 hours. Adjustments to normally required field hours may be necessary in order to meet this requirement.

### **No Credit for Life Experience**

Academic credit for life experience and previous work experience shall not be given in lieu of the field placement or any other required social work course.

## **THE FIELD PLACEMENT PROCESS**

### **Tk20**

Before entering field, students need access to Tk20, the School of Social Work's online assessment software. Access can be purchased (a one-time fee for a seven year access) through the university bookstore or directly from Tk20. For more information about purchasing Tk20, please contact the field education office. To learn more about Tk20, please visit their website at [www.tk20.com](http://www.tk20.com)

### **Eligibility for Field**

Undergraduate students must have completed all coursework per the degree plan and have a GPA of 2.5. Graduate students must have a GPA of 3.0 and be ready for field according to the student's plan of study.

### **Application Process**

Field office staff will distribute information to students about the placement application and interview process during classes the semester before entering field. At that time, students will be given a deadline for completing a field application in Tk20. Students are required to attach a current resume to the Tk20 application. The student will review and acknowledge documents (see appendix) about confidentiality, responsibilities, background checks, and other possible agency requirements in the Tk20 application. The field office staff will not interview the student until the required paperwork has been completed. All paperwork must be turned in and interviews completed before the deadline or students will not be able to enter into their field placement.



## Interviews

Once applications are completed, students must schedule interviews with the field office – usually within two to three weeks of the application deadlines. Students are expected to bring to this interview completed applications (via Tk20), and resumes. Interviews may not be held if any of this information is missing or incomplete. **Field placement activities will not begin until the application and the field office interview are complete.**

The interview with the field office will give the placement staff a better understanding of the student's practice interests. The student will have the opportunity to ask specific questions about field placements and to provide the interviewer with any additional information deemed helpful to the placement process. During the interview students will be reminded about their signatures in Tk20 that confirmed their commitment to confidentiality, work/internship responsibilities, background checks, and other agency requirements where they apply. Any costs associated with background checks and other agency requirements are the responsibility of the student. The University does not pay for background checks, drug tests, TB tests or other needs of an agency. The University does provide professional liability insurance for the student.

### *Tips for successful agency interviews:*

1. *Learn about the agency's purpose and population(s) served;*
2. *Have questions prepared;*
3. *Dress in business attire;*
4. *Provide your resume; and*
5. *Smile!*

## Placements

At the end of the field office interview time period, the field office staff begins the placement process. **Students are not to contact agencies or arrange their own placements at anytime.** It is the responsibility of the Field Office to notify students of their potential placement (agency) and likely field instructor assigned to them if they are selected for their internship at that particular agency. The student then arranges for an interview with the agency and notifies the field office after the interview is completed. If the agency accepts the student, then the process is complete. Concerns expressed by the student after an agency interview will be handled on a case-by-case basis by the Field Office personnel.

The student will be formally notified of the assigned field agency and field instructor as soon as confirmations have been secured by the Field Office. Students are asked to be patient, because the placement process involves so many people and so many students. Be

assured that every student will be placed unless there are outstanding academic or performance issues

Different factors enter into the selection of an agency for a student; however, the main factor is finding a “good” match between the student and the agency’s field instructor. As such, students’ preferences for agencies or special populations cannot be guaranteed. **IN NO CASE MAY A STUDENT SEEK TO ARRANGE A FIELD PLACEMENT OR EXPLORE A PLACEMENT POSSIBILITY WITHOUT FIRST INVOLVING THE COORDINATOR OF FIELD EDUCATION.**

### **The Geographical Field Liaison Model**

The Field Office personnel are each assigned to a geographical area. The field office personnel are responsible for making contact with agencies each semester by face-to-face visits, phone, or email within their assigned areas. If problems arise during the internship, the field office personnel assigned to that particular agency will make a contact (phone, F2F, group meetings, etc.) in an effort to resolve the problem as soon as possible.

### **Field Agency Responsibilities**

Eligible agencies are those that provide social work internship opportunities for students. They also employ licensed social workers who meet field instructor requirements. Students may be considered for agencies that do not have social workers only if a qualified off-site Field Instructor agrees to provide weekly supervision. In such situations, it is also necessary to identify a qualified employee that is on location with the student and someone that earned a degree in a related profession (e.g., psychology, recreational therapy).

All approved field agencies/organizations must have a current affiliation agreement with the University of Southern Mississippi before a student is placed. Responsibilities of the agency per the affiliation agreement are listed below.

1. Make social work experiences available to the student(s) for learning purposes.
2. Provide available space and instructional materials to the student(s).
3. Inform the liaison faculty of any changes in policy and/or procedures which may affect student learning and/or opportunities.
4. Inform the liaison faculty of any changes in the employment status or assignment of the assigned field instructor which may affect student learning experiences and/or opportunities.

5. Provide a planned educational experience to the social work student(s) in accordance with the Field Education Manual of the School of Social Work.
6. Provide resources, opportunities, social work staff time, and cooperation in planning for the educational program within the facility for the student(s).
7. Allow planned time to the social work field instructor to meet and consult with the field liaison from the School of Social Work.
8. Provide facility and social work program orientation to the student(s).
9. Provide, as needed, facility and social work program orientation to the field liaison from the School of Social Work.
10. Complete and submit to the School of Social Work a mid-term evaluation form and a final evaluation form for each semester a student is placed in the facility.
11. Retain full responsibility for the care and welfare of all clients when students are in training.
12. Allow social work field instructor/s to attend Field Education training when student/s is/are completing internships in their agency.
13. Honor the University and School of Social Work policy that prohibits students from transporting clients in the student's personal vehicle.

### **Field Instructor Responsibilities**

The School of Social Work uses the title of Field Instructor to designate those individuals who supervise the activities of social work students completing internships. Field Instructors must have an MSW from an accredited school of social work and at least two year's practice experience. For BSW students and students in the first year of the graduate program, a field instructor may hold a BSW from an accredited school of social work plus two year's practice experience. Exceptions to this requirement are made on a case by case basis. For example, the School of Social Work and the Field Office value many grandfathered social workers who have the knowledge and skills from years of practice experience.

All agency Field Instructors must be experienced in the job and be employed by the agency for at least 6 months, complete field instructor training, and agree to provide one hour of supervision each week. Field instructors will complete the learning agreement, evaluations, and, as necessary, performance improvement plans.

The Field Instructor's responsibilities include the following:

1. Adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics, especially section 3.02, Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings, Education and Training. (See appendix.)

2. Interpret the field instruction program to other members of the agency staff in order to create a climate conducive to learning and facilitate the use of agency resources which will help meet the learning needs of the students.
3. Orient the student to the agency.
4. Provide a minimum of one hour of individual supervision per student per week and select appropriate learning assignments for the student.
5. Assist the field student in adding responsibilities or assignments to the learning plan.
6. Provide opportunities to develop practice behaviors. Establish a plan of reviewing and evaluating student's progress in order to assess adequately.
7. Complete the mid-semester evaluation of the student and review with the student. If concerns are identified, contact the field office immediately.
8. Complete the end-of-semester evaluation of the student and review with the student.
9. Report concerns to the field office in a timely manner. Field instructors have the option of implementing performance improvement plans as they deem necessary.
10. Understand that field instructors function as both professional social workers and as educators. Therefore, appropriate boundaries should be demonstrated.

*Tips for successful field supervision:*

1. *Provide timely, honest feedback. Students want to know how they are doing.*
2. *Address concerns as they arise.*
3. *Call the field office if you have questions. We're happy to help.*
4. *Maintain a professional boundary to avoid dual relationships.*
5. *Be open to learning from your intern – our students are learning from the latest research.*

### **Task Coordinator**

Some agencies may use a Task Coordinator in addition to a Field Instructor. A Task Coordinator is under the direction of the Field Instructor and may provide instruction and supervision regarding the daily tasks for the student intern. The Task Coordinator is usually a social worker but may have a degree from a related profession. The Task Coordinator may provide feedback to the student and field instructor but does not conduct weekly supervision meetings or formally evaluate the student.

## Student Responsibilities

The primary role of the student is to meet the educational objectives of the field curriculum as an active participant in an agency setting. Students are assigned to affiliated agencies where they are administratively responsible to an agency supervisor (the Field Instructor) and where they are expected to comply with agency policies and procedures. Students are also expected to comport themselves in accordance with the profession's standards of ethical performance.

The student's responsibilities include the following:

1. Assist in developing and implementing the learning plan.
2. Ensure the learning plan is signed and uploaded to TK20
3. Adequately prepare for weekly supervision
4. Follow agency policies and procedures, especially confidentiality.
5. Abide by the NASW and State of Mississippi Codes of Ethics.
6. Adhere to standards and/or guidelines of the agency's monitoring or accrediting bodies.
7. Accept supervision and feedback from the Field Instructor and agency staff.
8. First consult with the Field Instructor if problems occur in the placement; notify field office if a resolution cannot be reached.
9. Complete the required minimum contact hours.
10. Complete evaluations of field agency and field instructor in TK20.
11. Students must respond in a timely manner to all Field Office communications. For security purposes, emails will be sent to the students' USM email address only. Checking your USM email regularly is necessary

*Tips for a successful internship:*

1. *Be open to learning. Put aside expectations.*
2. *If you don't understand something, be sure to ask your field instructor.*
3. *Be familiar with agency policy and procedure.*
4. *Develop a habit of self-reflection using the Integrated Processing Model.*

## FIELD AT PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT

The field education program is designed with the belief that a more meaningful and integrated learning experience can take place if students are provided with a wide variety of field learning experiences. However, the School does recognize that expenses and the extremely limited amount of student financial aid are contributing factors in allowing some students to pursue graduate education. It is believed that agencies which have an on-going investment in a valued employee may be willing to make further commitment to the employee's professional development if the student is allowed to remain employed while completing their internship with the same agency.

This arrangement is possible only if the internship responsibilities are sufficiently different from the primary job responsibilities of that student. New and different learning experiences must be educationally focused, must be in keeping with the student's specific educational needs, must meet the requirements of the School and the Council on Social Work Education, and, it can in no way diminish the educational quality of the field internship experience.

In-agency placements require that the student must be placed within a different unit or division of the agency. They must be assigned an MSW field instructor who has never functioned as that student's supervisor in any work setting. Students already employed in a social service agency or an agency that provides social work services may, under certain circumstances, be allowed to complete field internships in that same agency. The following conditions must be met before an in-agency internship can be considered.

1. The agency must be formally affiliated as an approved placement site with the USM School of Social Work.
2. The student's field assignment duties and responsibilities must be significantly and qualitatively different from his or her employment duties and responsibilities and must be in a different department, division or program of the agency.
3. A qualified, approved Field Instructor who is an employee of the agency but not the student's employment supervisor must supervise the student's practicum activities and meet a minimum of one hour per week to process the student's learning.

*Tips for successful field at your place of employment:*

1. *Physically separate your field work from your regular work.*
2. *Discuss changes in hours with your co-workers so they know when you're available for regular work questions and consultation.*
3. *Take care of yourself! Find ways to manage stress.*
4. *Be honest about your field time so you don't shortchange your education.*

4. The student must be granted an appropriate amount of employment release time to complete the required number of clock hours for the semester.

A student wishing to complete an in-agency field internship must state his/her intent on the application for a field internship. At the field office interview, the requirements will be discussed. The student will be given an Employment-based Field Placement Agreement to complete and have signed by appropriate agency staff/ employer. The Employment-based Field Placement Agreement must be completed and turned in within 30 days of the interview. The student cannot enter into their field internship without the Employee-Based Field Agreement completed, signed by all parties and approved by the field office. **Each consideration for this type of placement is reviewed on a case-by-case process. The Field Office must approve this type of internship.**

The student's field instructor will be an MSW employee of the agency other than the student's regular employment supervisor. When this is not possible within the agency, utilization of an experienced field instructor from another agency can be considered. The School has the responsibility of approving the field instructor. The agency must agree in writing to accept an MSW field instructor from outside the agency, if necessary, to complete the placement for the student.

Rationale for the field instructor being an MSW other than the employment supervisor is that a field instructor who is not the employment supervisor is more likely to concentrate on learning objectives and processes rather than on the completion of agency tasks and can be more objective about a student's performance. Standards and scheduling for this placement must be the same as for any placement: the setting must be able to provide the required types of learning experience to meet the expectations of a field placement.

## **GENERAL FIELD PLACEMENT POLICIES**

### **Attendance at Field Agency**

Absences from the field agency should be approved ahead of time and if an emergency situation that was unplanned it must be reported in a timely manner to the field instructor or the field instructor's designee.

The field course syllabus provides information about attendance at the field agency relative to the course requirements. In general, however, any student – no matter which program or which field class - missing 32 hours of field must report this to the field office

immediately. This much time is difficult to make up and will require a meeting with the appropriate program coordinator. Missing 32 hours or more at the field agency may result in the student being asked to withdraw from the field course.

### **Tardiness**

When possible, tardiness should be communicated with the field instructor or the field instructors' designee ahead of time.

### **Contact Hours**

Students are expected to negotiate their field schedule (specific days of the week, specific hours, etc.) with the Field Instructor. A breakdown of the amount of time per week to be spent in field is contained in the previous section "FIELD COURSES". Students may not complete the internship before the end of the semester.

All students must complete the required minimum number of contact hours. A contact hour is defined as time spent at the agency or time spent working on behalf of the agency. A lunch break is not counted as a contact hour. Students follow the university academic calendar meaning that the student does not have to attend field during university scheduled breaks and holidays. If the student works at the agency during these times, the student may count the hours. The student may find that it is necessary to attend field placement during breaks in order to achieve the required number of contact hours. Students must remain in field until the end of the semester, even when total required contact hours may have been reached before the last day of the semester.

It is the student's responsibility to make sure that the required number of contact hours is achieved. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with the Field Instructor to make up any lost time. When a student determines that achieving the required hours cannot happen, the student must notify the field office immediately.

Only hours logged while in field will be counted. The only exception will be when the School designates otherwise for such thing as field agency and/or university closures due to disasters or extreme events.

### **Positive Background Checks**

The School of Social Work does not require background checks of its students. However, students need to know that background checks are required by more and more field



agencies. Agencies differ in their requirements for type of background checks and types of offenses that would prohibit internship. Students need to understand that a positive result on a background check may result in not being able to complete the field education requirements for graduation.

### **CHANGES AND INTERRUPTIONS IN FIELD**

Sometimes it is necessary to consider the removal of a student from a field placement after the start of the semester. A student may be removed from a site for the following reasons:

#### **Agency Request**

Documentation of:

- Failure of the student to abide by NASW and/or State of Mississippi Codes of Ethics.
- Failure of the student to abide by agency and/or accrediting body policies, procedures, rules, or regulations.
- Lack of satisfactory demonstration of the learning plan practice behaviors.
- Repeated, unexcused tardiness and/or absence of the student.
- Lack of student's progress in correction of identified deficiencies.

A student who is asked to leave a site under any of the above conditions will be subject to a failing grade and forfeiture of all completed hours at the discretion of the Field Coordinator in consultation with the field liaison, the appropriate program coordinator, and other relevant persons. The student may be required to attend a student performance committee meeting consisting of the director, appropriate program coordinator, and field coordinator to determine next steps within the program

#### **Field Liaison/Field Education Office Request**

- Evidence that the field site is not providing an adequate learning experience and/or adequate supervision for the student.
- Agency closure, agency restructuring that does not support internship requirements, and/or resignation or termination of the Field Instructor. The departure of a Field Instructor will result in removal of a student only if satisfactory alternative arrangements for qualified supervision cannot be made.

In the above instances the student, the Field Instructor, and the classroom instructor will consider the particular needs of clients as transition plans are made. The student may be

given credit for some or all completed hours at the discretion of the classroom instructor in consultation with the Coordinator of Field Education

- Failure of the student to abide by USM School of Social Work field policies and procedures.
- Failure of the student to abide by the School of Social Works Professional and Technical Standards.
- Failure of the student to respond to communication from the field office and/or the field instructor in a timely manner.

A student who is removed from a placement for these reasons stated above will be subject to a failing grade and forfeiture of all completed hours depending on the circumstances and at the discretion of the Field Coordinator in consultation with field liaison, the appropriate program coordinator, and other relevant persons.

### **The Performance Improvement Plan**

If at any point in the practicum a student's performance falls below an acceptable level, a Performance Improvement Plan should be completed. This plan is a tool designed to address problematic behaviors and/or situations that may arise. This allows the student the opportunity to correct the identified behavior(s) and successfully complete the practicum. This plan should be implemented as soon as a need for change is identified to allow time for the student to address concerns and successfully complete the internship.

### **Transfer to another Agency**

A request by a student to be moved from the assigned field agency to another agency (after the start of the semester) for any reason other than those cited above will be considered on a case by case basis.

In all cases, transfer of a student from one agency to another during the course of a semester (regardless of circumstances) is dependent on the availability of an appropriate alternate site and cannot be guaranteed. Issues related to personality conflict with agency staff and/or issues related to student dissatisfaction will be addressed by the field office staff. Students will be expected to communicate with the field instructor before requesting assistance from the field office AND WILL BE REQUIRED TO ATTEND A MEETING INVOLVING ALL PARTIES BEFORE ANY CHANGES ARE MADE. Efforts will be made

to prevent a disruption in the placement through open communication and problem-solving between the field office staff, the student, and the field instructor.

### **Protocol for Reporting Abuse or Neglect**

Interns are mandated reporters according to Section 43-21-353 of the Mississippi Code of 1972. It is not uncommon for social work interns and field instructors to collaboratively report suspected abuse/neglect of vulnerable populations. If there is a circumstance where the need to report is disputed between the student and field instructor the student should do the following immediately because these issues are time sensitive:

1. The student will contact the field office, after consulting with the field instructor.
2. The field office will contact the field instructor.
3. The field office will set up a meeting with the field instructor, and appropriate agency representatives.
4. If the student's concerns meet the standards of reporting in accordance with Section 43-21-105 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, the field office will assist the student in making a report.

### **Student Request Withdrawal from Field Course**

A student who wishes to withdraw from field after the start of the semester must first consult with Field Education Coordinator. Once it has been determined that withdrawal is appropriate, University procedures regarding dropping courses must be followed (refer to the current University undergraduate or graduate Catalog and/or the current Registrar's Bulletin for specific procedures and grading policies).

A student may have legitimate extenuating, personal circumstances (as determined by Field Education Coordinator in consultation with other appropriate persons) that preclude completion of the placement in the semester for which the student is registered in the course. In such an instance, the student may be given a grade of "I" if late enough in the semester and will be required to re-enroll in the field course the following semester to complete the remaining hours at the same agency (if possible). In all such instances the integrity of the field experience must be a primary consideration.

## **SELECTION OF FIELD AGENCIES AND FIELD INSTRUCTORS**

The School of Social Work is always willing to have community agencies express interest in becoming field instruction sites. We welcome new agencies that reflect the diverse populations they serve. We seek affiliations with agencies and field instructors that prepare and provide the student with social work values, ethics, knowledge, skills and cultural competencies in working with a wide range of clientele. Exploration may be initiated by either the agency or by the School to assess whether an agency would be appropriate for providing the type of field instruction that would carry out the objectives of the field education program.

### **Agency Affiliation Criteria**

Potential settings are visited and carefully reviewed by the Field Education Coordinator. In order to be approved for affiliation by the School of Social Work for the purpose of providing field instruction to social work students, agencies must meet the following criteria:

1. Agencies must be related in their purpose and function to the mission, goals, and objectives of the School of Social Work.
2. The agency administration supports the philosophy of professional education and is interested in and willing to commit staff time to student instruction
3. The agency offers a professional climate conducive to learning; staff relationship and morale contribute to a favorable climate for professional development.
4. Agencies' philosophy of service must be compatible with the philosophy, values, and ethics of the Social Work profession.
5. Agencies must be clear about their programs and services offered.
6. Agencies' programs must offer students a wide range of learning opportunities to work with client systems (individuals, groups, families, communities and organizations from various cultural, ethnic, social, religious, and sexual orientation backgrounds).
7. Agencies must have qualified Field Instructors or be willing to allow outside field instructors to supervise the student.
8. Agencies must have been in operation for at least two years at the time of affiliation
9. Agencies must not be dependent on students to fulfill basic staffing needs.
10. The agency maintains and observes policies with respect to nondiscrimination in relation to clients, staff, students, and faculty.
11. Agencies must make reasonable arrangements for students with regard to space and equipment.

12. Agencies must agree to the execution of a written School/Agency Affiliation Agreement between the University of Southern Mississippi and the agencies' representative duly authorized to enter into contractual agreements.
13. Agencies must be willing to provide some release time for field instructors to attend field orientation sessions and field instruction continuing education seminars and workshops.

### **Agency Affiliation Process**

1. The Field Education Office is informed that an agency is interested and potentially suitable and eligible to provide field instruction to social work students and provides an Application for Agency Affiliation and an Application for Field Instructor Approval to the interested agency.
2. The agency returns the completed applications and resumes for all potential Field Instructors to the Field Education Office.
3. If, after a review of the paperwork, it is determined that the agency meets affiliation criteria, a site visit may be scheduled for the purpose of verifying suitability and availability of space.
4. The administrative assistant manages the Affiliation Agreement process, notifying the Field Education Coordinator of delays or problems.
5. If the agency is denied approval for affiliation, the agency is notified of the decision in writing.

### **Updating Agency Information**

The Field Education Office at the University of Southern Mississippi is consistently updating agency records. The Agency Update Information form is available to those agencies that have a current affiliation agreement on file with the University and the School of Social Work.

We strive to keep agency information current, so this will help maintain an open relationship between the University and the Agency. If at any time agency information changes, the agency personnel are encouraged to contact the Field Education Office, so necessary revisions can be made.

### **Field Instructor Criteria**

Generally, Field Instructors are social workers who are employed in social service agencies or other institutions and have some experience in supervision and are recognized as skilled and competent social workers. Field Instructors must be willing to accept and implement the educational objectives of the curriculum of the School of Social Work. They

are considered adjunct faculty by the School even though their time and expertise are donated. In a few instances, Field instructors are members of the School faculty who are assigned the responsibility for field instruction. In the case of faculty serving as Field Instructors they are required to spend at least one hour per week with each student in individual supervision. New Field Instructors must attend training prior to supervising a student.

### **Eligibility Criteria to Supervise Students**

In order to be eligible to supervise the social work professional must possess:

- A Master of Social Work degree from a school accredited by the Council of Social Work Education
- Two years postgraduate social work experience
- Employment for at least 6 months at current agency.

In some cases exceptions can be made so that a social worker with a Bachelor of Social Work degree from a school accredited by the Council of Social Work Education could supervise some students. These individuals can only supervise an undergraduate and first year graduate students.

Helpful attributes for field instructors include:

- Solid record of successful practice and a willingness to participate in refining existing skills and develop new ones to model for students.
- High standard of professional ethics and values and the ability to incorporate those values and ethics with students in practice
- Imaginativeness and creativity in developing field experiences related to field instruction course objectives.
- A willingness and ability to organize time for instructing students, meeting with field liaison, and attending meetings for field instructors.

In the relatively uncommon circumstance that no properly credentialed social worker is available within the agency to provide field instruction, the program assumes responsibility for reinforcing a social work perspective by asking a faculty member to serve as field instructor.

## DOCUMENTATION AND EVALUATION

The field education experience involves much documentation: orientation to field, learning agreement, mid-term evaluation, final evaluation, and contact hours. The School of Social Work uses Tk20 software as an online tool to manage these field documents.

### **Tk20**

Students are assessed a one-time fee associated with Tk20, which gives them access for seven years. Field instructors submit time sheets, learning agreements, and evaluations through Tk20. Tk20 training is included in all field instructor trainings. For more information, please contact the field education office to learn more about Tk20. More information about Tk20 is available at <https://usm.tk20.com>.

### **Orientation to Field**

The student is responsible for making arrangements through the field instructor to complete the orientation to the agency. The student uploads the Orientation to Field Form (copy included in the appendix) to Tk20.

### **Learning Agreement**

The Learning Agreement is uploaded into Tk20 by the student and consists of two parts: (1) the agency's social worker job description and (2) the field instructor's guide to supervision. The purpose of including the job description is to identify the social work tasks and responsibilities the student will be learning. Some field instructors may want to circle those tasks that directly pertain to the student. In lieu of an agency job description, the field instructor may create a list of social work tasks and responsibilities to guide the internship. The Learning Agreement (see copy in appendix) has a section for adding other learning tasks the field instructor and/or student may wish to include. Some examples may be adding learning opportunities related to understanding the agency's grant submission process, additional experience intervening with families, or community organizing events.

The following Field Instructor's Guide for initiating a supervision session with a student is presented below. These are the competencies that the field instructor will use to evaluate the student. Both the student and the field instructor should use the guide for weekly supervision discussions:

1. What opportunities did the student have during the week to demonstrate the practice behaviors?

2. What opportunities need to be created in order for the student to use the knowledge and skills associated with the practice behaviors?
3. Feedback from the field instructor on student's performance of particular practice behaviors.
4. Questions from the student regarding practice behavior challenges.

## **Evaluations**

Each field course requires a mid-term and a final evaluation. The evaluations use a 10-point Likert-type scale to operationalize each practice behavior. The field instructor completes the evaluation and then reviews their ratings with the student. The School of Social Work encourages field instructors to accurately rate the students and avoid the natural tendency to inflate ratings. The School believes that ratings in the 'highly achieved' category (ratings of 9 and 10) are exceptional and, thus, be reserved for exceptional performance. Also, the School's experience is that students value and want honest feedback. Objective assessments are critical in order to develop competent social workers.

The mid-semester evaluation consists of a formal verbal conference and completed mid-term evaluation. This occurs during the week outlined in the field education calendar. Students should come prepared to discuss how their performance demonstrates their level of competence of each behavior on the learning agreement. They should also identify any barriers to achieving competence.

### **Guideline for Student and Field Instructor for Mid-term Evaluation**

- Discuss the student's level of performance on each behavior
- Summarize the most significant areas of progress as well as areas concern related to progress
- Evaluate the student/field instructor relationship with regard to teaching and learning styles, directness of feedback, and other process issues
- Discuss a ranking indicating current performance

The Field Education Office must be notified immediately should the field instructor's concerns warrant significant negative feedback. A ranking of 4 or below on the evaluation form triggers a notification of concern. The student, field instructor, and someone from the Field Education Office will then meet to discuss concerns and complete a plan to ensure the student has an opportunity to correct their behavior and thus increase ranking for each behavior identified.



Sometimes circumstances are such that a student has not had the opportunity to exercise knowledge and skills for a particular practice behavior. In such circumstances, the field instructor needs to indicate that the student was unable to demonstrate that skill through a N/A (not applicable) designation. Additionally, the field instructor should make a remark on this item in the comments section of the evaluation.

Following is an example of an evaluation of one practice behavior. The complete evaluations can be found in the appendix.

Practice Behaviors	Method of Assessment	NOT ACHIEVED		MINIMALLY ACHIEVED		MODERATELY ACHIEVED		ACHIEVED		HIGHLY ACHIEVED	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		1) Advocate for client access to the services of social work;	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct Observation <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisory Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Review of Process Recording <input type="checkbox"/> Review Documentation <input type="checkbox"/> Other - Specify:	No concrete evidence of client advocacy. This has been discussed in supervision.	Discusses need for client advocacy in supervision but has taken no action	Discusses in supervision a plan for client advocacy but no action taken	Student has planned action for client advocacy and executed plan	Student advocates for client access to services on a consistent basis			

**Contact Hours**

Students and Field Instructors need to document contact hours in Tk20 on a weekly basis. All persons involved need to monitor hours to assure completion of the required number.

**Student Evaluation of Field Experience**

At the end of the semester, the student will complete a Student Evaluation of Field Experience in Tk20. This evaluation is intended to provide feedback to the field office on the learning opportunities at the field agency. Evaluation information is not shared with the field agency or field instructor without permission from the student.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*Will I be expected to perform as a social worker right away?*

No. During field instructor training, we ask that students gradually become oriented to an agency and the culture of social work practice. The following four-step process is helpful when beginning an internship:

1. Orientation to the agency (see Orientation Form in appendix).
2. Observing agency activities, client services, meetings, etc. The student and field instructor should process all observations.
3. Student conducts social work tasks in presence of field instructor or designee.
4. Student begins independent work.

*Can I add holiday and break time to my field hours?*

No.

*I worked during the holiday. Can I count my hours?*

Yes. Extra field hours does not mean that a student can finish their practicum before the last field day as defined by the Field Office.

*Don't hours worked during the holiday get doubled?*

No.

*Does my lunch break count toward field hours?*

No

*My agency is closed for a holiday that the university doesn't recognize. I was supposed to work that day. Do I get to add these hours?*

No. You may need to arrange with your field instructor to make up these hours.

*Are there weekend and weeknight placements available?*

Field placement takes place during normal business hours, i.e., Monday through Friday during the day. Field opportunities with non-traditional business hours are essentially non-existent. Students need to prepare to participate in weekday field assignments.

*I do not have a car. Can I get a placement within walking distance from where I reside?*

We cannot guarantee that an eligible field placement agency is located near student's residence. Arranging travel to and from a field agency is the student's responsibility.

*I don't think my agency is providing enough services for clients. What do I do?*

The services an agency provides or does not provide are impacted by many factors. Talk to your field instructor about your agency's mission, goals, and scope of services.

*Why can't I get the field placement that I want? I need to be placed at a certain agency so I can add it to my resume for future work in that area.* Field sites are selected first and foremost for educational purposes. The number of students being placed at any given time limit placement options but consideration is always given to accommodate student requests.