

CHAPTER 5: FIELD EDUCATION POLICIES

ADA and Students with Disabilities

Services are available to each student with a disability and the Collaborative MSW Program utilizes the University policy on students with disabilities.

In general, each student with a documented disability is provided reasonable accommodations in the classroom and field. A student with a disability must first meet with a representative from the office that works with students who have disabilities who in turn accesses the necessary documentation for the University, explains campus resources available to the student, and reports to faculty (anonymously), the necessary accommodations needed for instruction.

In the field, students with a documented campus disability should explore with the field site the possible accommodations that can be made by the placement site and in line with the American's with Disabilities Act.

At times, students with disabilities are concerned about how their specific disability might impact their work in the field. For further exploration of this issue, students are encouraged to seek out the consultation of the Collaborative MSW Field Coordinator.

Caregiver and Criminal Background Checks

In 1998 the Wisconsin Legislature passed a law requiring a check on the background of persons who provide care for others or who have access to people who receive care in a number of Wisconsin healthcare and human service agencies. In addition, the law identifies specific crimes and offenses that will limit individuals from employment in various areas of practice.

Because this law also applies to students who have field placements in certain settings, the Collaborative MSW Program requires that a Caregiver/Criminal Background Check (Appendix E) be completed on all persons accepted to the MSW Program. The University facilitates the background check for a student fee, which is charged during the MSW Admission Process. Students who graduate from the MSW Program and go on to secure certification or licensure as a social worker in the State of Wisconsin are subject to the same background check. These background checks must be renewed every four years.

Should the results of this background check limit possibilities for a field placement in certain areas of the human services, the faculty will discuss the situation with the student as well as the implications this may have on the education, certification, and practice goals of the student. Any student wishing to discuss their situation prior to, during, or after completion of the Caregiver/Criminal Background Check, may do so by meeting with their advisor or the MSW Program Coordinator.

NOTE: In addition to the completion of Criminal and Caregiver Background Checks, some agencies also have other requirements for students. Such requirements may include, but are not limited to: providing immunization records, obtaining immunization(s), completing a tuberculosis screen, or passing a drug test.

Efforts will be made to alert students to known additional requirements before making Field Placement referrals. However, sometimes such requirements are not known to the MSW Field Coordinator beforehand. A student has the right to refuse a Field Placement whose requirements may violate his/her right to privacy.

Change of Field Site

Under ordinary circumstances, student placement is made for two consecutive semesters in the same agency in order to allow for depth and breadth of learning. Changes in placements are considered problematic since leaving one agency for another disrupts the continuity of the learning experience. Placement changes should be conducted in a thoughtful and carefully planned manner.

When either the student or the Agency Field Educator requests a change of placement, the following steps will be followed:

1. The student and Agency Field Educator will meet together to fully discuss the situation. If a satisfactory resolution is not accomplished, contact should be made with the Faculty Field Liaison.
2. The Faculty Field Liaison will meet with the student and the Agency Field Educator to clearly define the challenges and consider possible solutions. The Collaborative MSW Field Coordinator should be notified and included in the problem-solving process. When the student initiates the change request, s/he must provide a compelling rationale for the action, including a statement of learning goals, why the goals cannot be accomplished at the current placement agency, and a plan outlining how the practicum experience can be successfully completed by an agency change. When the Field Educator initiates the change request, s/he must provide a detailed rationale for the action including why the student and/or the placement are not appropriate, as well as the corrective action taken to attempt to remedy the identified problems.
3. When an agreement is made that a change of placement is in the best learning interest of the student and/or the agency, the Collaborative MSW Field Coordinator will seek an alternative placement for the student.
4. The student will be responsible for following the traditional application-for-placement procedures under a time frame established by the Collaborative MSW Field Coordinator.
5. The student will be responsible for following the NASW Code of Ethics and agency policies governing termination of employment and termination of client services.

NOTE: The student may be required to repeat some or all of the field hours to establish that learning requirements are accomplished.

Child Welfare Education & Advancement Program

The Child Welfare Education & Advancement Program (CWEAP) is a partnership between the Wisconsin Division of Children and Family Services and the Collaborative MSW Program at UW – Green Bay and UW – Oshkosh. CWEAP operates with federal matching funds made available through Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, which provides training stipends to prepare MSW students to work in the field of public child welfare as employees of state, county, tribal and community partner agencies.

The stipend is a monetary award, paid at the beginning of each semester, which is equivalent to the cost of in-state tuition and fees.

The Child Welfare Education & Advancement Program has two primary goals:

- To prepare graduate social work students for employment in regional public, tribal and community partner agencies that provide child welfare services, and;
- To prepare current employees of these agencies for advanced practice and leadership in the field of public child welfare.

Toward this end, the Program combines specialized child welfare coursework with a supervised field practicum in a public or tribal child welfare agency in NE Wisconsin. Students accepted into the Program are awarded a yearly stipend. Program participation requires a commitment by the student to work in a public or tribal child welfare agency upon graduation.

Students who are interested in the CWEAP program should contact the Child Welfare Coordinator for more information about the application and program requirements.

Concurrent Employment and Field Education in the Same Agency

Students are strongly encouraged to explore field placements different from their employment locations. A field education agency approved for this arrangement must meet the same approval criteria established for all other agencies. In addition, there must be a compelling reason why the employment-based placement is the best option to meet the learning needs of the student (Appendix H). Under the NASW Code of Ethics, potential issues involving boundaries and conflicts of interest may enter in where there is an ongoing (or previous) relationship with an employer. Students desiring a field placement at their work site must complete the Student Request and Agency Agreement for a Work Site Field Placement (Appendix H).

A student who wants a placement in an agency where he/she is a past or current consumer of services must discuss this request with the Collaborative MSW Field Coordinator. Normally a placement of this type will not be approved.

The Collaborative MSW Field Coordinator must be involved at all stages in making arrangements for concurrent field education in the agency of employment. For a concurrent placement to be approved, a written agreement must be developed which includes the following elements (Appendix H):

1. The student in the same agency shall count field practicum hours within the student's placement agency independently from any paid employment hours.
2. Assignments for field must differ from those associated with the paid work assignments.
3. Assignments for field must be educationally focused toward the learning needs of the student and the curricular objectives of the Program, i.e. facilitate student accomplishment of program competencies.
4. Supervision must be provided by an MSW that is not concurrently providing supervision for the paid work and that Agency Field Educator must be a member of the agency staff.
5. The agency should provide the required release time so that the student can accomplish course work and field instruction.
6. The appropriate agency personnel must complete and sign the Student Request and Agency Agreement for a Work Site Field Placement (Appendix I).

Confidentiality

Any information regarding the student's performance in field is to be kept confidential among the educational partners (Field Educator, Faculty Field Liaison, Collaborative MSW Field and Program Coordinators, and faculty) and is not to be released to those outside the university without the express, written permission of the student. U.W system confidentiality policies also apply.

In regard to student records, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act regulate access to individual student academic records. Under this law, students have the right of access to their files and must give written consent before any material in the student file can be released to anyone other than faculty.

In regard to client records, students should have access to client files and other agency records only insofar as access is related to the learning objectives. Students must make themselves familiar with and abide by the rules of confidentiality and laws governing informed consent and privileged communication and protocols for responding to court orders for client information. The NASW Code of Ethics should also be consulted.

Driving

During the internship placement process, students are encouraged to discuss the use of an automobile in their field duties with their Agency Field Educator during the preliminary field placement interview. Appropriate forms for driving in the field must be completed and approved prior to any student using their automobile for any field business in connection with their social work placement for each academic year the student is in placement (Appendix Q). All paperwork needs to be submitted and approved before a student uses their vehicle in the placement. Students will be notified when their form is or is not

approved.

All approved drivers should be aware of the following: their personal automobile insurance will be primary to State coverage; a student transporting clients or conducting agency business must maintain personal automobile insurance with current State of Wisconsin limits as the minimum; the State will only provide excess coverage to drivers when they are using their personal vehicles on official University business. Official University business means undertaking field tasks at the request or direction of field personnel, which are typical of prudent social work practice.

Students who choose not to fill out the necessary form(s), or students who are not authorized by their respective university, assume complete liability for any situation, which results in the use of their automobile in the line of duty. The Collaborative MSW Program encourages students who do not fill out this form to refrain from using their automobile to transport clients or to conduct ANY other type of 'agency' business in the field placement, which involves the use of an automobile.

NOTE: It is illegal for a student without a valid driver's license to use a vehicle even if the student fills out the necessary driving forms(s).

Extended Medical Leave

MSW students who are absent more than 16 continuous hours from their field placements due to a medical condition must complete the Request for Extended Medical Leave form (Appendix M). The form must be approved by the Field Educator, Field Liaison, and Field Coordinator. When possible this request should be submitted prior to the extended medical leave. When a student is absent less than 32 hrs the consequences will be determined by the Field Liaison.

MSW students who are absent more than 32 hours continuously from their Field Liaison for medical reasons must submit a written plan for how the missed hours will be completed. The plan must include the following: 1) A brief explanation of the nature of the medical condition, 2) A health professional's verification, 3) A plan for how the missed hours will be completed, 4) Estimated date when the hours will be completed and 5) Approval of the MSW Field Educator, the MSW Field Liaison, and the MSW Field Coordinator..

Field Hours

Minimal Weekly Field Hours

Foundation students are expected to complete 16 hours in the Field each week for a total of 240 hours each semester. Advanced students must complete 15 hours per week and attend the Field Seminar class for a total of 450 hours in the Field. These hours should be evenly spaced throughout each semester. However, under exceptional circumstances, students may reduce their hours to not less than 12 per week. This requires a written request from the student (Appendices K and L), which is approved by the student's Faculty Field Liaison, the Collaborative MSW Field Coordinator and the Agency Field Educator. In order to process these requests and plan for faculty work loads, the Collaborative MSW Field Coordinator may

set deadlines by which students may submit requests for a change in field hours. Students are required to adhere to these deadlines or risk having their request denied. All field hours must be completed no later than the last day of the second semester of the Field Placement. Incomplete grades for Field are rarely authorized and require that a Faculty Field Liaison is available to provide monitoring and support until the Field hours are completed and the Evaluation of Student Mastery in the Field Placement is completed.

Absences

Absences from Field Placement:

The student is expected to notify the Agency Field Educator as early as possible, of any absence. Absences in excess of one week must be reported to the Faculty Field Liaison. Absences, for whatever reasons, must be made up in order that the required hours may be accomplished by the end of each semester. Failure to complete the required number of hours prior to the end of the semester will result in either: the development of a plan to accommodate for the missed hours; a failing grade and/or a grade of incomplete.

Absences from the Generalist Practice Courses or Field Seminar:

Students are expected to attend and fully participate in courses. Occasionally, situations arise wherein a student desires to miss a course due to either pressing service requirements to a client that cannot be rearranged, or a unique learning opportunity in agency programming where Agency Field Educators invite their participation. Decisions to miss practice classes and/or the seminar (SW 729 & 730) for these reasons require responsible behaviors by the student including providing an explanation to the Faculty Field Liaison, obtaining her/his advance permission, notifying the course/seminar instructor, and accepting responsibility for accomplishing the class work missed. Instructors may also have specific policies regarding absences, which are noted in course syllabi. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies as well. Students who miss the Field Seminar must (a) make up missed seminar hours in field and (b) adhere to Instructors' specific policies regarding absences, which are noted in course syllabi.

Changing Field Placement Schedule

Foundation students: A schedule of Field beginning and ending dates is provided to students at the time of registration. Field runs for 15 weeks each semester. This schedule usually does not include January Interim as students are not required to be at field during this period. However, Foundation students may complete Field Hours during January Interim only, provided they have approval from the MSW Field Coordinator, their Foundation Field Liaison and their Agency Field Educator. Generally Foundation students must complete 16 hours per week in the Field for 15 weeks (240 hours/semester). Students may modify this schedule to either lengthen the fall field experience through January or begin the Spring field experience early. Students can complete no less than 12 hours per week for either semester and students may not end the Spring field experience early. Foundation students will need to make this decision at the time they register for fall Field. Faculty supervision will be provided during the January Interim. Students must complete the Change of Hours form and submit this for approval to the Fall Field Liaison, the Agency Field Educator and the MSW Field Coordinator (Appendix K).

Under exceptional circumstances Advanced students may begin their Field Placements during the January Interim, but no earlier than January 2nd. Students must complete the Change of Hours form and submit this for approval to the Spring Field Liaison, the Agency Field Educator and the MSW Field Coordinator (Appendix L).

Note: Any change in plan other than the normal 16-hour placement (15-hour for Advanced students) must be pre-approved by the Collaborative MSW Field Coordinator, the Faculty Field Liaison and the Agency Field Educator.

Liability Insurance

Students should make themselves aware of the terms of the liability insurance coverage provided them by the University of Wisconsin. This insurance protects them and their field agencies in the case of negligence or malpractice suits related to the MSW student's fieldwork in the agency. The insurance is in effect throughout each academic semester.

The Universities of Wisconsin - Green Bay and Oshkosh are currently protected for liability arising out of the negligent actions of its employees, agents and officers through the State Self-funded Liability Program administered by the Department of Administration under State Statutes 893.82 and 895.46. The State will indemnify University employees, officers, and agents against liability for damages arising out of their activity while acting within the scope of their respective employment or agency. Students are considered agents of the University when participating in field programs that are part of a credit course or required for degree completion.

Additionally, the National Association of Social Workers Insurance Trust provides no-deductible liability coverage against claims related to professional education. Students may purchase this coverage if they are enrolled in a Council on Social Work Education accredited social work degree program and if they are members of NASW. Costs are nominal. Students interested in learning more about this insurance can contact the NASW Assurance Services at 855-385-2160.