

## **Department of Field Education Policy and Instructions**

### **THE FIELD PRACTICUM (Signature Pedagogy)**

Field is the signature pedagogy of professional development in Social Work.

MSW student in the full-time, and part-time programs have four (4) field practicum and seminars courses. Students in advanced standing tract have two (2) practicum/seminar courses associated with the specialization advanced practice year two. Fields one and two are considered foundation while fields three and four are specialization advanced practice courses. The practicum may be completed in traditional social work agencies or innovative nontraditional settings. Students are required to attend the field fair to familiarize themselves with agencies and entities with field placement availabilities. The fair is typically scheduled in the Spring semesters as students are preparing to transition from field two to field three when students must enter a different field site from the foundation fields courses. Students seeking a change of sites also attend the fair. Actual placement is coordinated by the field director and liaison, who provide placement options to students according to their chosen specialization and method of practice.

The field practicum experience provides for the integration of classroom learning with practical experience. It reinforces the mission, goals and objectives of the University and the School of Social Work. Students in the practicum are exposed to a progression of learning experiences, from the basic to the more complex, allowing for differences within the individual student as well as his/her learning style and practice readiness. For the field practicum to provide the essential process of integration, on-going exchange between the field practicum settings and the faculty must take place. This experience enhances the relationship between the School and the field agency supervisors and other agency staff. The mutual exchange allows the field agency supervisors to learn about the School's curriculum and for the faculty to learn about the field agency.

It is essential for professional development that students demonstrate the knowledge, values, skills and cognitive/affective processes of social work practice in the context of a field setting. The range of the practicum experience is intended to provide a comprehensive experience which allows for the integration of material presented in the classroom inclusive of the total curriculum. This may include content in the field of practicum problem areas as well as in intervention strategies and practice models available within the field practicum agencies.

During the first year, students' experiences are generalist-focused and include opportunities to work with individuals, families, groups, organization and community. During the advanced year, students' field experiences are assigned based on their area of specialization and method of practice.

Field faculty is responsible for facilitating a weekly seminar. The seminar for first year students is focused on assisting the students to integrate classroom content from Human Behavior in the Social Environment, Direct Service and APO courses with their developing core social work skills which provide a generic practice foundation with an ecological and systems perspective. Emphasis is placed on assessment and planning and the application of practice models. The seminar reinforces the integration of the content presented within the classroom.

Advanced practice seminars focus on issues in the particular field of practice. Currently there are two such seminars: Health/Mental Health (H/MH), Children, Youth and Families (CYF). Each seminar assists the student to integrate content from field of practice courses as well as other required courses. During the advanced year, agency selection must represent the students' concentration area. In addition, the students' field experience should generate a spirit of inquiry within the field agency and should provide the student with the opportunity to conduct his/her required research project. The advanced year seminar and field practicum build on the generic practice foundation to assist the student to develop more advanced assessment skills which aid her/him to identify, analyze, synthesize, understand, explore and implement intervention strategies within their chosen field of practice and practice role in an increasingly effective manner. The field faculty assists the students with the integration of more advanced assessment and intervention skills. If necessary, students may be assigned practice experiences in more than one field agency to ensure exposure to appropriate experiences supportive of their chosen concentration.

The overall goal of the practicum is to help the student integrate and assess and evaluate her/his theoretical knowledge, skills, values, cognitive/affective processes and to acquire a disciplined practice foundation in the profession.

Students must register for both Seminar and Practicum the same semester, and each seminar and practicum should be the same section. Note: *Students cannot advance without successfully passing field courses. Failing a field course may be cause for dismissal (refer to field evaluation 3.1.2 below)*

***REFER to the Field Education Manual for further details and program specifics***

## **FIELD PLACEMENT PROCESS**

### ***a) Criteria for Entering MSW Field Program***

Field Education is an inclusive part of the MSW Program. Criteria for admission to field program is acceptance in the School of Work. All students admitted to Southern University School of Social Work are required to participate in the field practicum and are also required to attend a weekly Field Seminar for each year in attendance. Full time students participate in the Field Practicum concurrently with course work for each of the four regular semesters prior to graduation. Students enrolled in the part time program have a planned delay in entering the field. These students, having been admitted to the School of Social Work the preceding fall, enroll in Field Practicum I in the Fall semester of their second year. By the time students complete Field Practicum I, all first semester courses will have been taken. The same holds true for the Field Practicum II and all second semester course work.

#### **Procedural Steps:**

1. Students must apply for the Field Practicum during the Spring Semester prior to beginning the practicum in the Fall semester. New students complete the application, meet the field team and are assigned potential placement sites, which the students schedule interviews and find a match for placement. Field faculty will discuss Field education during seminar classes and the field director and liaison will visit other classes to familiarize students with the application process.
2. Students must submit application with resume and a transcript before February 15<sup>th</sup> reflecting prerequisites taken.
3. All applications must be reviewed and signed by the student's faculty advisor prior to submission to designated Field Faculty Instructor.
4. Students will be notified by April 1<sup>st</sup> to pre-register for Field Education, contingent upon successful completion of Spring Semester. Students will be notified of final approval for Field by July 15<sup>th</sup>.

Thereafter, students will be assigned to Field Placement sites on or before August 1<sup>st</sup>. Full time students entering the program late will have placement within three weeks of acceptance into the MSW program.

### ***b) Selection and Requirements for Field Placement Agencies and Field Supervisors***

Agencies selected as field settings are expected and required to provide the broad-based practice experiences necessary for optimum student learning. These agencies are selected by the School based on their support of the educational objectives of the field experience and their willingness and preparedness

to provide the time and instruction necessary to achieve the student's field experience objectives. Negotiations for the development of field practice placements in an agency may be initiated by either the agency or the school. Information regarding the agency's program and the schools are exchanged.

The school will provide the agency with a field placement manual, school calendar description of courses and an overview of the field requirements. The agency will provide the school with a description of service programs and service delivery methods. The agency will identify persons willing to serve as field supervisors. The school will be given the names, educational background and work experience of the staff selected to provide supervision.

When a decision is reached by the agency and the school, an affiliation agreement is signed by the designated agency staff, the school's Dean and the Director of Field Placement. The affiliation agreement delineates the specific responsibilities of the school, agency and student assigned to the field placement.

#### **Selection of Field Agency Instructors**

Individuals selected as field agency instructors are professional social workers who hold a CSWE accredited MSW degree with a minimum of two years of post-graduate work experience. Field agency instructors must express and demonstrate a willingness to render supervision, to provide on-going instruction and training, and to structure the learning situation so that students are provided with opportunities to utilize skills and practice models taught in their courses.

On occasion, an agency may be utilized as a field site although it may not have a professional social worker among its personnel. Such an agency, of course, must have been found to demonstrate support for the school's mission and themes. In this instance, the provisions can be and have been made to contract with qualified individuals who have the professional training to function as agency field supervisors.

#### **FIELD TIME REQUIREMENT**

Students are not expected to be at their agency during the final exam week.

If a field agency has a holiday on a day the student is expected to be at the agency, the student is not required to report nor does he/she need to make up the time.

Student will be given field credit for attending any workshops or conferences that are related to the social work profession. Student must notify the field supervisor at least two weeks in advance of their planned absence from field.

Students are expected to continue participation at the field agency during the Spring break. No student shall be allowed to report to field sites between semesters or at any time students are not officially enrolled in field practicum with the University.

If a student is absent from the agency for sick or personal emergency, he/she must work out a plan with the agency supervisor to make up the missed time.

Students are expected to report to the field agency on time as scheduled. If a student is going to be late, a courtesy call to the field supervisor is expected, attendance is important. Excessive absence and tardiness as determined by the field supervisor may negatively impact the student's grade.

Students must maintain a time sheet reflecting the hours earned at the field agency. The time sheets must be signed by the field supervisor weekly.

Student must complete a minimum of **225 hours each semester** during Field Practicum I and II. Students are not expected to be at their field agency during the final exam week each semester. If a field agency has a holiday on a day in which the student is expected to be at the field agency, the student is not required to report nor does he/she need to make up the time.

Time missed for personal illness or personal emergency must be made up. Students are required to make a plan with their field supervisor to make up the missed time upon their return to the field agency following their absence.

Students will be required to submit time sheets to their Field Seminar Faculty. These time sheets must be signed by your Agency Field Supervisor. The Field Seminar Faculty will inform the students of the due dates.

### **SUPERVISION**

Students will be assigned to a field agency and will have an assigned field supervisor who will be responsible for providing one hour per week individual supervision. The standards written by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) require the supervisor hold a CSWE accredited Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree or Master Social Work (MSW) degree with a minimum of two years post graduate experience

## **USING THE EMPLOYMENT AS A FIELD PLACEMENT**

Field Placement at your place of employment cannot occur unless approved by the Director of Field Education.

For students already working full time in a social service program, arrangements can be made to complete one academic year of field requirement at the employing agency. These arrangements must be approved by the Director of Field Education on a case-by-case basis. Approval is conditional based upon the following:

- a) practicum experiences must be qualitatively distinct from those in student's paid employment, and
- b) supervision and instruction must be provided by an individual who is not the student's assigned supervisor and who meets the other requirements for a field agency supervisor.