

SACRAMENTO STATE - DIVISION OF SOCIAL WORK - MSW FIELD EDUCATION ESSENTIAL INFORMATION & FIELD ADMISSION CRITERIA

Social work education provides students with a unique opportunity to apply what they are learning in the classroom to practice in the field. Working in a social work field agency allows students to leverage classroom theory and knowledge to develop their professional competence and identity, as well as begin their commitment to serving clients and communities. The profession of Social Work uses field education as the avenue through which it “professionalizes” its members. It is through a field practicum that the student learns how to think and act like a professional social worker.

The learning in a field practicum can be very demanding. It is imperative that every student be prepared to make the commitment of time and energy that the field practicum will require.

The student is expected to be proactive, interactive, relational, and self-reflective. The focus of the practicums is to work with vulnerable populations within a social service agency setting. The student will develop the skills of client engaging, assessment, intervention planning, intervention, and evaluation. While the emphasis is working with clients, the student must also know that collaborating and problem-solving with colleagues inside and outside the agency is equally emphasized.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1. TIME AND SCHEDULING REQUIREMENTS

a. Year Long Practicum

The MSW field experience is for one school year (September through May). Unless there is unforeseen circumstances, the student is at one agency the entire time. Field students take time off for campus holidays.

b. Regular Schedule

Students must maintain a regular weekly schedule when in a field practicum. Field students are not permitted to continuously change their field schedule to accommodate, for instance, a changing work schedule. Students must organize their time and schedules to accommodate the professional needs of their MSW field practicum.

c. MSW-First Year

Two Eight-Hour Days – 16 Hours/Week

Students are required to be in a field practicum for 2 eight-hour days -equaling 16 days a week. On occasion a site might accept a student working one eight-hour day and two four-hour days. Students cannot negotiate a schedule that breaks down the 16 hour/week commitment into small increments of time.

d. MSW-Second Year

Three Eight-Hour Days – 24 Hours/Week

Students are required to be in a field practicum for 3 eight-hour days -equaling 24 hours a week. On occasion a site might accept a student working two eight-hour day and two

four-hour days. Students cannot negotiate a schedule that breaks down the 24 hour/week commitment into small increments of time.

2. **WEEKEND AND EVENING PRACTICUMS**

The Division of Social Work Field Program does not offer practicums that are solely on weekends or evenings. If a student has full-time daytime employment (i.e., Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm), the program will not guarantee a field practicum. *Students who work full-time must be able to flex their work schedule in order to accommodate a field practicum.*

3. **PAID PRACTICUMS**

Students frequently inquire about the possibility of a paid field practicum. While some agencies occasionally offer stipends or paid practicums, this is not the norm. When an agency offers to pay a student during the field practicum, the faculty works closely with that agency to ensure that the field experience remains educationally-focused

4. **EMPLOYMENT-BASED PRACTICUMS**

Students often inquire about using their human service employment as a field practicum site. There are strict guidelines that must be met in order to be placed at an existing employment site for a field practicum. First and foremost, the agency must be willing to provide the student with an educationally-focused experience for the required number of field hours. Therefore, if a student seeks to use current employment as a practicum site, the student must be assigned completely different educationally-focused duties. Employment-based field practicums must be approved by the Director of Field Education prior to the student being placed in the agency.

5. **MATCHING STUDENT TO PRACTICUM**

The Field Education Office assigns practicums to students based on the pool of agencies that have requested students. The students' specific learning needs, past experiences, and home location are taken into account. An attempt is made to have students near their home, *but this is not guaranteed*. A student can be placed up to 50 miles from home.

6. **ADULT CRIMINAL HISTORY**

Students who have misdemeanors or felonies may find it difficult to obtain a field practicum, future employment, and/or licensure in the profession of social work. Most practicum agencies require students to undergo fingerprint checks and some require extensive background checks. Thus, students should be advised that while the Division of Social Work will provide a student with up to three referrals for a practicum, it does not guarantee that a student will be accepted. A history of felony or misdemeanor convictions may present a barrier to acceptance by any university approved agency and may prohibit the student from completing the social work degree requirements. Students must be prepared to disclose to the Field Education Program and to potential field practicum sites any criminal background which may appear through fingerprint or background checks.

MSW FIRST YEAR: FIELD ADMISSION CRITERIA

Note: A field practicum is not guaranteed by the Division of Social Work. A student has to demonstrate a certain level of professionalism and aptitude in order to be accepted to a practicum.

ACCEPTANCE INTO MSW PROGRAM

A student needs to have been accepted into the MSW program and have an official status of “graduate student.” A fulltime MSW students begins field in the first semester in the program. A part-time student begin field in the fall semester of the second year of the three-year program.

FIELD APPLICATION

The student needs to submit a completed MSW Field Application (May).

MANDATORY FIELD ORIENTATIONS

Students need to attend two separate MSW Field Orientations

- First MSW Field Orientation (June): This orientation helps the student better understand the mission of field education. As well, students will learn the process for how to interview and accept a field practicum. .
- Second MSW Field Orientation (August): This orientation occurs directly before students enter into their practicum. Topics covered: The Learning Agreement, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Competencies, Safety in the Field, Legal and Ethical Concerns, and Self-Care.

ADULT CRIMINAL BACKGROUNDS

Students who have misdemeanors or felonies on their record (even if the convictions were long ago or have been expunged) must meet with either the Field Director or Field Coordinator prior to receiving a field referral. There is requirement to complete paper work disclosing the offenses.

AGENCY INTERVIEW AND FIELD REFERRAL PROCESS

The student interviews at and is accepted by an approved field agency. The student has three opportunities to interview (i.e., at three different agencies). The student completes and submits the required field “acceptance or denial” forms after the interview.