

# Student Field Education Manual



Department of Social Work

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**Acknowledgement:**

Field Education program at CSUF began in 2007 with a dynamic Social Worker, Christine Ford, RN, LCSW. She started this program with 20 students and assisted the program to grow to 250 students currently in field placements in Los Angeles, Orange County, San Bernardino, Ventura County and surrounding areas. She developed this Field Education Manual, and we feel it is an honor to continue to grow and build this program and manual.

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## Field Education at CSUF

Field Education, known as the “Heart of Social Work Education,” has been identified by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) as the signature pedagogy of the profession. What this means is that field is the place where the student has the opportunity to apply theory to reality. Here at CSU Fullerton, Field Education is seamlessly integrated into the fabric of the student academic experience.

The purpose of field education in social work is to provide the student with an interface between classroom theory and actual practice. The student is provided with opportunities to:

- Develop practice skills by applying classroom theory to real life situations
- Determine which approaches work in practice and how they must be adapted to specific situations
- Understand the effect of the organizational context of professional practice while developing skills in agency-based social work
- Utilize relevant research to inform practice
- Learn to use supervision and consultation appropriately
- Begin to engage in self-assessment
- Develop a professional identity

The Social Work Department has forged a number of partnerships with community agencies to provide each student with a relevant field education experience. At each agency, qualified Field Instructors and/or Preceptors provide mentorship, guidance, and feedback to the student and the Faculty Field Liaison about the progress of the student.

In the pages that follow, the policies and procedures of the Field Education component of the Department of Social Work are outlined and explained. It is the focus of the Field Faculty to assist each student to be successful in their pursuit of the Master of Social Work degree and to produce competent, effective, and ethical social work practitioners.

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## Admission to Field Education

Admission to the MSW Program is required to apply for the field work component of the MSW degree. Once the student has been offered and has accepted admission into the CSUF MSW Program, the student will complete the Foundation Field Application (see procedures on page 7).

Admission to the MSW Program does not guarantee that the student will be assigned to a field placement. The *student must meet the criteria and be accepted by a field agency to complete the field work requirement*. The criteria include, but may not be limited to:

- The ability to provide a clean background check, such as a LiveScan.<sup>1</sup>
- Reliable transportation to, from and during the field work day.
- TB testing and/or health screens
- Willingness to accept the field work agency assigned to the student.
- Ability to make alternative arrangements for other personal responsibilities (such as childcare or other caretaking).
- Health status that does not cause frequent absences.
- Availability to interview with the assigned agency.
- Understanding that social workers often make home visits and/or connect with clients in non-traditional settings.
- Understanding that social workers serve all clients and embrace diversity.
- Attendance at all Field Readiness Trainings days.

Incoming 1<sup>st</sup>-year field students need to be available from June through the beginning of the fall semester for the field placement process. “Available” may mean by email, phone, and electronic conferencing or in person, depending on the situation and need.

All 1<sup>st</sup>-year field students begin their Field Education by attending Field Readiness Training. This is a four-day training is designed to give the student the information necessary to be successful in the field work component of the MSW program. Students will be notified in advanced regarding the mandatory dates of the Field Readiness Trainings.

This pre-placement training prepares and informs the student about:

- Professional identity
- Ethics, confidentiality
- Mandated reporting responsibilities and dilemmas
- Self-care, time management, goal-setting
- Preparation for and use of supervision, field seminar, and evaluation of progress
- Community immersion, identification of barriers to service, etc. (a day in the client’s shoes)

## Requirements for Completion of the Field Education Component of the MSW Degree

The Field Education curriculum consists of four Field Seminar courses: MSW 540, MSW 541, MSW 542, and MSW 543. These courses are each weighted as 3 units and include the fieldwork hours in the assigned agency. A grade of “Credit” is required before enrolling in the next course in the sequence. While the courses are listed separately field placement is continuous, the student should regard the Field Seminar and Fieldwork placement as an academic year. Each year the student will complete a minimum of 525 fieldwork hours (250 in fall, 275 in spring). By graduation, each student will have attained a minimum of 1050 hours of supervised experience.

Students who have received a “No Credit” in any field seminar will not be enrolled in the next sequence field course. For example, if a student receives a “No Credit” in MSW 540 the student will not be enrolled into MSW 541 and would be required to repeat MSW 540 before enrolling in MSW 541. The student will be required to repeat the “No Credit” course which would be offered the following academic year, providing the student is in good academic and ethical standing to practice. The student who is not in good academic standing or possibly not ethically able to practice will be referred to the Student Status Review Committee to determine the most appropriate course of action including the student’s fitness for the social work profession.

All students will be assigned to a Faculty Field Liaison and must register for that faculty’s field section(s). The student will remain with the same Faculty Field Liaison for the academic year (MSW 540, 541 & 542, 543). Students will wait to register until the Field Faculty has been assigned. Once assigned, the student will receive an email stating which Field Seminar course to register into. The department will apply “permissions” on each Field Seminar class to eliminate the possibility of registering for the wrong course.

MSW 540 and MSW 541 are the Field Seminars that comprise the Foundation Year. The Foundation Year is considered a generalist social work concentration, designed to give each student a thorough grounding in social work practice, policy, diversity, research and human behavior. The student will develop a professional identity, internalize the social work values and principles, and begin to demonstrate the ability to think critically by applying theory to observation and practice. The assigned field work agency provides the student with the “laboratory” in which to implement these concepts.

MSW 542 and MSW 543 are the Field Seminars that comprise the Concentration Year. The Concentration Year is the advanced year in which the student will take policy and practice classes within their chosen concentration (Child Welfare Services, Community Mental Health, or Aging). In addition, the assigned field work agency will provide the student the opportunity to advance and hone their practice skill set with a specialized population.

The overall requirements for completion of the Field Education Component include:

- Attendance at all days of Field Readiness Training
- A grade of “Credit” in all four Field Seminar courses
- Completion of 2 years of field placement in an assigned agency with a minimum accrual of at least 1050 hours of experience

## Placement Procedures

Upon admission to the MSW Program, the student will be contacted by the Directors of Field Education regarding application to the Field Education component of the degree. The student will log-in to the online student portal and go to TITANium Communities; the student will enter the **MSW Foundation Field Practicum** Community. Step-by-step directions and PowerPoints will guide the student through the information for our field program. The ASPN (Agency Student Partnership Network) is the database where students complete the field application, submit their resumes and upload a professional photo of themselves. Once completed the student will be admitted into the field program, the placement process will begin.

During the Foundation year, students focus on core competencies such as developing a professional identity, interviewing skills, assessment, case management, information dissemination and resources, application of theory, critical thinking, and judgment. As such, these are transferable skills and the student will be assigned to an agency that is best fit for the student to master these skill sets.

A variety of things are considered in matching students with the field placement. Those include, but are not limited to:

- Where the student resides during the academic year. Every effort is made to match the student with an agency within a reasonable commute.
- Previous experience
- Language skills
- Compatibility with the agency and the Field Instructor
- Agency able to offer the student learning opportunities that challenge the student to grow professionally

It is emphasized that the department will match the student to an agency, but the student will need to **interview and be accepted by the agency**. Should the student not be accepted by the agency, due to inadequate interviewing skills and/or unacceptable background screenings, the student will need to meet with the Student Field Director before another field placement is assigned. While every effort will be made to place students in a field agency, it is the responsibility of the **student** to present themselves maturely, professionally, and appropriately in the interview to secure the placement. The student should not interpret that there is a guarantee of a field placement.

Students who apply and are accepted into the CalSWEC-IV-E stipend program will be placed by the CalSWEC Project Coordinator in an appropriate public child welfare agency or community-based child



welfare agency. Most often, the placement will be at Orange County Social Services Agency-Children and Family Services.

### *Concentration Year Placement*

For the Concentration Year, students will be placed in agencies appropriate to that Concentration. Child Welfare students (including CalSWEC) will be placed in public child welfare agencies or agencies that serve foster youth. Mental Health Concentration students will be placed in agencies that provide mental health and health-related services to all age groups. Aging Concentration students will be placed in agencies that provide services for older adults and their families/caregivers. The considerations are similar to those of the Foundation Year, however, students will have some input into the best type of agency to assist them to complete their skill sets as entry-level social work practitioners.

Students will be required to attend a mandatory Concentration Field Placement meeting in January. Students will be required to complete the Concentration field application, submit their updated resumes in the ASPN (Agency Student Partnership Network). Once completed, the student second-year placement process will begin.

## **Field Education Roles**

### **Faculty**

**Directors of Field Education-** are responsible for the overall administration and oversight of the Field Education component of the MSW program. Identifies and contracts with agencies to provide student field placements; provides Field Instructor training; serves as the lead on Field Faculty team; provides students with guidance and mentorship in developing social work skills and identity; maintains congruence of Field Education component with CSWE standards; arbitrator of field issues as they arise.

**Faculty Field Liaison-** instructs the Field Seminar class; serves as a liaison between student and the field agency; monitors and evaluates student progress in mastering field competencies; provides the student with guidance and mentorship in developing social work skills and identity.

### **Field Placement Agency**

**Field Instructor-** agency employee with MSW degree from a CSWE accredited school of social work; serves as a mentor and teacher for the student placed in the agency; provides supervision, guidance, and feedback regarding student performance and progress.

**Preceptor-** agency employee who may or may not possess the MSW degree, who is assigned to teach the student the day-to-day work of the agency; interacts with the Field Instructor to monitor student progress and assign learning opportunities appropriate to the student.

### **University**

CSUF covers each student in a field practicum regarding Workman's Compensation Insurance and Professional Liability, as the student remains in good standing.

## Field Education Policies

1. Attendance
  - a. Students are expected to attend all Field Readiness Trainings, assigned Field hours and Field Seminar classes
  - b. Absences **must** be approved by:
    - i. Notification of the absence to both the Faculty Field Liaison and the Field Instructor/Preceptor as soon as the absence is anticipated
    - ii. Providing documentation of the legitimacy of the absence, if asked
  - c. All absences from the Field placement **must be made up** in a timely manner
  - d. Absences must be appropriate (illness, family emergency)
    - i. Students who skip field hours and/or Field Seminar to attend to other coursework or personal pleasure will be referred to the Director of Field Education
2. Campus Holidays
  - a. Students are to attend Field placement on all assigned days unless the agency is closed
  - b. Campus Holidays are indicated on the Field Calendar and other campus publications
  - c. Most campus holidays coincide with the holidays observed by the field agency, however, should the agency be open when the campus is closed, the student may attend the field hours rather than make the time up later
  - d. Students must be sure to distinguish the difference between a Campus Holiday closure versus days when there are no classes but the University is open (usually noted on the University calendar as a "recess"). If the University is open, even though classes may not be in session, the student is expected to provide service hours to their assigned agency
3. Comportment
  - a. Students are expected to abide by the NASW Code of Ethics at all times
  - b. Students are expected to maintain confidentiality, as defined by law, statute, agency policy and/or our Code of Ethics both inside and outside of the assigned field agency
  - c. The program maintains a zero tolerance policy for any violation of confidentiality
    - i. Violations include verbal, written breaches outside of appropriate venues
    - ii. Posting of information on social media sites constitutes a gross violation of confidentiality
    - iii. Zero tolerance means that breaches of confidentiality on the part of the student will result in referral to the Student Status Review Committee with a recommendation for dismissal from the program
  - d. Students are expected to behave as adult learners, demonstrating respect for instructors (faculty and agency) and fellow students
4. Transportation

- a. Students **must** have reliable transportation in order to successfully complete the Field Education component of the degree
  - b. This also means that students must maintain a current and valid driver's license, vehicle accident and liability insurance
  - c. Students with documented disabilities which prohibit driving and registered with the Office of Disability Support Services will be afforded reasonable accommodation as provided by law
5. Assignments
- a. Field specific assignments will be outlined in the field seminar syllabi
  - b. Students who are habitually late with assignments or who put forth minimal effort on assignments will be considered not to be progressing in professional identity and compartment and will be downgraded on the Comprehensive Skills Evaluation and may be referred to the Director of Field Education
  - c. Students are responsible for identifying agency opportunities for learning and documenting those as goals in the Learning Agreement at the beginning of each semester
  - d. Self-awareness is a social work value. Students are expected to be vulnerable in their weekly Reflection Journals. Understanding ourselves is necessary in being of service to others.

## Resolution of Problems in Field Placement

The MSW Field Education Program is committed to helping students obtain optimum practice and skill building experience in their field placements. Performance issues, personal and educational, occasionally surface in the field placement. Both students and Field Instructors are encouraged to have open, direct and ongoing communication with the Director of Field Education and/or Faculty Field Liaison so that any difficulties are identified early and a plan of action can be initiated. Issues/problems in field education can generally be categorized as one or more of the following as per the Social Work Handbook for Students:

- Situational: chronic transportation difficulties, illness, personal crisis, unreliable child care, etc.
- Environmental: lack of adequate opportunity provided by the agency to accomplish learning objectives, little or unsatisfactory field instruction, a personality conflict between the student and the Field Instructor or other agency personnel, etc.
- Field Performance: unsuccessful completion of projects or tasks assigned, lack of ability or motivation to learn social work skills, unable to utilize feedback effectively, difficulty completing tasks/field paperwork in a timely manner, not meeting the Learning Plan goals etc.

Should any of these issues occur, the Director of Field Education, the Faculty Field Liaison, the student and the Field Instructor will discuss and design an appropriate corrective action plan and a timeframe for said plan. In the case of environmental issues, the Director may change the field placement of the student. Should the student fail to make the necessary improvements or other concerns arise, a Student Status Review will be scheduled (see Social Work Handbook for Students).

A student ***may be removed*** from a field placement for the following reasons (see Social Work Handbook for Students for Code of Conduct):

- Repeated tardiness at the agency setting and/or tardiness without notification.
- Repeated absences from the agency setting and/or absence without notification.
- Repeated change in scheduled hours without approval.
- Field Instructors concern over attitudinal, behavioral or ethical considerations that bring into question the student's fitness for the profession of social work. This involves maintaining social functioning that allows for effective participation in the academic and practicum requirements of the program. Social functioning refers to the student's ability to cope with the demands generated by their interaction with their environment.
- Impairment in social functioning and/or occupational functioning may be exhibited by a single discrete episode that clearly violates the University's expectations for student conduct or the NASW Code of Ethics, state regulations defining professional misconduct, or by a pattern of recurring behavior which may include, but not limited to the following:
  - a. Consistently unable or unwilling to carry out departmental or practicum responsibilities.
  - b. Exhibits provocative behavior such that the behavior alienates the student from others, disrupts class or meetings or the flow of work in the practicum agency or results in repeated complaints from the field instructor, students, faculty, or others in the academic or practicum environment or related agencies.
  - c. Frequent misinterpretation or misrepresentation of others' communications or behaviors.
  - d. Displays erratic, disorganized, incoherent, or unpredictable behavior.
  - e. Lacks insight or is unable to perceive the negative consequences of own behavior.
  - f. Is disoriented to person, place, or time, such that the school or practicum responsibilities cannot be carried out.
  - g. Displays intoxication or impairment at the University or practicum agency, due to abuse of alcohol or a psychoactive substance or misuse of prescription medication.
  - h. Displays behavior that results in a consensus among faculty and/or field practicum personnel that the student would present a clear threat to others upon entering the professional field of social work practice.
  - i. Commits an act that violates state or federal law and compromises the student's fitness for the profession of social work.
  - j. Engages in unprofessional or inappropriate behaviors within the field, classroom, community or electronic/social media settings that intentionally or unintentionally put clients at risk or violate client's rights as specified by the NASW Code of Ethics and/or field agency policies.

Please refer to the **Student Status Review** section in the **Program Student Handbook** for information regarding student rights should removal from field placement occur.

## Evaluation of Student Progress and Grading

Each of the four Field Seminar classes (MSW 540, MSW 541, MSW 542, and MSW 543) is graded on a Credit/No Credit scale. This type of grading is conducive to allowing the student to challenge their professional growth and progress without fear of affecting the overall GPA. It is expected that students will make mistakes in field and will learn and grow without fear of reprisal.

The standard for earning a grade of Credit for the Field Seminar (includes the field placement as the “lab”) is outlined in the course syllabi and reprinted here:

The grade will be based on the student’s performance on the planned assignments. Specific determination of grades rests with the faculty field seminar course instructor, in consultation with the agency field instructor, and is based on the following criteria:

1. Student’s level of performance, attendance, and participation at the agency fieldwork site as well as in the field work class seminars;
2. Successful and timely completion of all required assignments involving the fieldwork agency and the classroom seminar;
3. Quality of the student’s performance as reflected in the written evaluations and at meetings with the site supervisor and/or faculty instructor; and
4. Suitability of student’s performance and character for the social work field in accordance with the ethical and professional standards of the Council on Social Work Education.

The student’s performance and skill level will be evaluated and assigned a rating:

0 = Intern has not yet met the expectations in this area, and there is not much evidence that the expectations will be met in the near future

1 = Intern has not yet met the expectations in this area, but there is evidence that the expectations will be met in the near future

2 = Intern understands the concept and is beginning to demonstrate the skill in this area, however, intern’s performance is uneven

3 = Intern understands the concept and has consistently met the expectations in this area

4 = Intern demonstrates a high level of skill development and has exceeded expectations in this area

The rating scale above will be applied, using the Comprehensive Skills Evaluation, by both the agency Field Instructor and the Faculty Field Liaison.

The CSUF Department of Social Work Field Faculty serve as gatekeepers to the profession of Social Work, and have high standards for the delivery of quality services to clients, agencies and communities. The Field Seminars and Field Placement are performance-based courses, and students will be evaluated according to *demonstrated learning* of the 9 competencies. The rubric for grades, based on internalization and demonstration of the 9 competencies is as follows:

1. A grade of “CR” reflects the student who is performing as expected for the Foundation Year (Level 1 and 2) or Concentration Year (Level 3 and 4). There is a normal process of development through the field experience where the student demonstrates the ability to incorporate the feedback of the Field Instructor and Faculty Field Liaison into their performance, form relationships with clients, and seek appropriate interventions while integrating theory into their practice. The student will have no absences from the field agency or will have made up absences due to illness, emergency, etc. Likewise, the student will have regularly attended and actively participated in the Field Seminar.
2. A grade of “NC” reflects the student who is not performing within the level of expectation for the Foundation Year (Level 1 and 2) or Concentration Year (Level 3 and 4). Examples would include the student whose performance in the field agency does not meet the expectations of the master’s level social work expectation and/or with frequent absences that have not been made up before the end of the semester, causing the student to be severely delayed in skill development. This student will not be allowed to progress to the next field sequence, may be allowed to repeat the course in the next academic year, and/or may be referred for a Student Status Review (see Student Handbook and Field Manual).

Students’ who have received a “No Credit” in any field seminar will not be enrolled in the next sequence field course. For example, if a student receives a “no credit” in MSW 540 the student will not be enrolled into MSW 541 and would be required to repeat MSW 540 prior to enrolling in MSW 541. The student will be required to repeat the “No Credit” course which would be offered the following academic year, providing the student is in good academic and ethical standing to practice. The student who is not in good academic standing or possibly not ethically able to practice will be referred to the Student Status Review Committee to determine the most appropriate course of action including the student’s fitness for the profession.