**Field Practicum**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q. When can I begin my field internship?**

* Students may begin their placement once field orientation has been completed, an understanding of field expectations have been assessed, and the field office has designated the date.
* Students may not begin a field internship without a School issued malpractice insurance and release of liability form completed – no exceptions
* Students who begin a field practicum prior to the field orientation may risk losing their placement

**Q. What if the field agency wants the student intern to attend an agency orientation prior to the field orientation?**

* Students must seek approval from the Field Director regarding interaction or any other responsibilities with the agency prior to field orientation.
* If approved, students are not authorized to have direct client contact until they attend the field orientation where the liability insurance coverage begins.

**Q. What if my field agency requires a background check, drug test, or immunization records from me?**

* Texas State does not pay for background checks, drug tests, or immunization records
* Some agencies provide the required checks and testing for a potential intern. These agencies will notify student interns of their process in completing this process.
* If an agency does not provide these services, the Texas State University School of Social Work is coordinating with Castle Branch which is a vendor which provides selected services for student interns. A field team member will assist in facilitating this process.
* Students should be proactive in making arrangements to complete the agency required documents and testing as soon as their internship has been confirmed.

**Q. Who are the points of contact for my field practicum?**

* The field instructor/task supervisor is your first point of contact for agency related issues
* Field liaisons are your seminar instructors and liaison with the agency where you are placed
* Field advisor is the faculty who placed you at the agency

**Q. What are the requirements of field education?**

* Students must apply for field education
* Students must pass all required courses prior to entering field courses – final grades will be verified by the academic advisor. A failing grade in required coursework may postpone field education
* Students must enroll in an integrative field seminar course concurrently with a field practicum course (BSW 4645/4650, MSW-F 5410/5411, MSW-A 5378/5979,5379,5679)

**Q. What am I responsible for doing in the field practicum?**

* Attendance of all integrative seminar classes
* Completion of all seminar course assignments
* Completion of all internship hours
* Successfully demonstrating competency in social work practice (educational learning plan)

**Q. Can I miss an integrative seminar class? What does that mean for my grade?**

* One missed seminar will result in an automatic letter grade drop
* Students may not miss a seminar class due to the limited contact hours available
* Medical emergencies (unplanned) are the only exception with proper medical documentation
* A passing grade in seminar is a “B” or better

**Q. How often does the integrative seminar course meet?**

* On campus students have a hybrid seminar
  + Meet in person every other week for 3 hours
  + Check in activity online every other week for 1 hour
* Online students meet virtually every other week for 3 hours
* Online students have a check in activity every other week for 1 hour
* The integrative seminar is a mandatory course

**Q. What are considered ‘contact hours’ in field?**

* CSWE requires contact hours as face-to-face with clients, families, and community constituents in an agency setting
* Weekly supervision time
* Field Instructor/Task Supervisor assigned and approved in agency workload
* Agency related orientations, trainings, workshops, and community meetings assigned by the agency
* Activities and tasks outlined in the educational learning plan

**Q. What are NOT considered ‘contact hours’ in field?**

* Field seminar class
* Travel time to and from seminar
* Travel time to and from internship/agency placement
* Watching videos, YouTube, movies, book reports, and other supplemental reading not in your educational learning plan or assigned by agency
* Self-care
* Field seminar homework
* Meetings on campus with field office representatives
* Anything not found in the educational learning plan

**Q. How do interns keep track of internship contact hours?**

* The field office provides student interns with a timesheet template and instructions
* Time sheets must be filled out and signed by the student intern and field instructor/task supervisor approving intern contact hours for the week
* Weekly timesheets are to be submitted to the faculty liaisons teaching seminar courses
* Contact hours must match educational learning plan activities and tasks

**Q.** **I work full time, can I intern only nights and weekends?**

* No, there are no nights and weekend only internships
* Interns are required to have approved supervision during their internship hours
* Field practicum is a required course which involves a substantial amount of time, working full time is not an excuse for missing any parts of the field education requirements

**Q. What if I do not complete all the required field contact hours?**

* Student interns will *not pass field practicum* without meeting contact hour requirements
* A failing grade in field is a “C” and below
* Student interns may have to begin the field practicum again if the course requirements are not met.

**Q.** **What if I have personal issues or a personal crisis during the internship?**

* Immediately schedule a time to speak with your field liaison to explain the circumstances and next steps in relation to communication with the field instructor/task supervisor in the agency
* If the situation is going to prevent you from completing the field requirements, a meeting with the Field Director will be necessary
* If the situation is affecting your well-being, consult with your field liaison so the appropriate School representatives can provide support and guidance on resolution

**Q. What is supervision and how many hours of supervision do I need each week?**

* Supervision is direct one-on-one meeting with an approved social work professional (field instructor/preceptor) to support your development of social work competencies while in the field practicum agency
* It is the intern’s responsibility to arrive at supervision with an agenda of items to be discussed. This is the intern’s time to have complete access to a professional social worker and this time should be maximized
* Student interns meet with their field instructor/preceptor for a minimum of one hour every week
* Schedule your weekly supervision day and time in advance with your field instructor/preceptor
* The weekly supervision form will support a structured supervision session
* Ask for feedback from your field instructor/preceptor to make improvement in your professional development
* Process client issues and feelings about your experience in the agency during supervision

**Q. What if I do not have an agency supervisor and have a preceptor assigned?**

* Student’s who do not have an on-site field instructor (MSW or BSW) will be assigned a ‘task supervisor’ who is a representative from the agency who will provide the daily supervision.
* A ‘preceptor’ will be assigned to the intern to provide weekly social work supervision for a minimum of one-hour
* The ‘task supervisor’ is responsible for signing the educational learning plan, mid-, final evaluation and timesheets for contact hours completed by the intern in the agency

**Q. What is an educational learning plan?**

* The educational learning plan is the contract between the student and the agency which outlines practice behaviors and tasks related to the nine (9) Council on Social Work Education Competencies
* Each competency includes practice behaviors, corresponding learning activities, evaluation criteria, and target dates
* Student interns will receive a learning plan template with instructions to complete
* The educational learning plan is the tool to conduct midterm and final evaluations during the internship
* The educational learning plan is developed by the student with the field instructor/task supervisor and then submitted to the field liaison during a schedule meeting.

**Q. How will I be evaluated in my field placement?**

* Student’s will be evaluated during their internship by the field instructor/task supervisor through a midterm and final evaluation
* Weekly supervision is an opportunity to track your progress and development of social work competencies
* The midterm and final evaluations are the formal instruments used to evaluate the student’s internship experience in relation to the educational learning plan. The field instructor/task supervisor provides the direct feedback and evaluation
* Field instructors/Task Supervisors recommend a Pass/Fail to the field liaison based on students’ evaluation and performance in the practicum which is signed and dated by the student, field instructor/task supervisor, and the field liaison.
* Field Liaisons are the Texas State School of Social Work faculty of record for field instruction and final grades

**Q. Will my faculty liaison visit me at the agency and how often?**

* The field liaison will visit you at least once during the semester. This may include one face-to-face visit and/ or a web-based visit for online students. However, the field liaison may decide to conduct more than one on-site visit depending on the internship experience.
* The field liaison will determine the most appropriate time and type of visit based upon the availability of the field instructor

**Q. What do I wear to my internship?**

* Follow the agency’s dress code, speak with your field instructor/task supervisor about the expectations of the agency
* When in doubt, dress professionally for your internship
* Remember, you are representing the agency, Texas State School of Social Work, and the profession
* If you are unsure, contact Texas State University’s Career Center

**Q. What are my work hours in the internship?**

* As a student intern, you must follow the hours of operation of the agency
* Set up a work schedule with your field instructor within the first week
* As an intern, determine the policies regarding arrival time, lunch time, and authorized leave
* Discuss with your field instructor holidays and days off to determine your available time off
* Discuss with your field instructor the policies for calling in sick or informing someone you will be late
* Discuss with your field instructor your integrative field seminar dates and times

**Q. What if I don’t like my agency? What if I am having conflicts in my agency?**

* We encourage student interns to speak with the field instructor/task supervisor to discuss issues of concern
* If you feel there are any safety concerns, *immediately* address with your field instructor and field liaison
* If the situation at your agency is delicate, speak with your field liaison immediately to guide you on next steps
* Resolving conflicts in the workplace is part of professional development

**Q. Can I switch to another agency placement?**

* The Office of Field Education works diligently to secure an internship which is a good “fit” for each student entering field. The Director and Field Team will review each internship uniquely and determine if adjusting a student’s internship is appropriate. However, the goal is to maintain one internship for the duration of the field placement.

**Q. What if I believe there are ethical violations occurring in my agency?**

* If a student believes there are ethical violations occurring in the agency they need to approach their field instructor/agency supervisor as soon as possible to discuss the concern
* The student should share these concerns with the field liaison as soon as possible to determine the best approach in addressing the ethical violation
* The student can process the experience during supervision with the field instructor or preceptor or field liaison to understand the violation through a social work lens/perspective

**Q. Can I conduct home visits with clients?**

* Yes, with a representative of the agency and never alone
* Safety considerations are always important when assessing a visit in the field
* Review the Guidelines for Enhancing Safety and Minimizing Risk in Field

**Q. What if I must transport clients?**

* If the agency requires you to transport a client(s), you may only use an agency vehicle
* Never transport a client alone, partner with an agency representative
* ***Texas State University is not liable for accidents***
* Talk with your field instructor about your concerns for transporting clients if you feel uncomfortable doing so

**Q. What if I feel unsafe in my field placement?**

* If students feel unsafe in their agency, inform the field instructor/task supervisor immediately to explain the circumstances
* Students should inform the field liaison who can assess the best course of action
* Students must communicate this concern as soon as they feel unsafe. Prolonging the circumstance could exacerbate the situation

**Q. What if my agency requests to terminate my internship?**

* If an agency requests to terminate an internship, the student should notify their field liaison as soon possible
* The Office of Field Education will be involved in this decision and work to resolve any issues
* The field liaison is the student’s primary point of contact for any concerns related to the overall internship

**Q. What if I complete all of my hours before the end of the 15 weeks?**

* The earliest date students may complete their placements, even if their field hours exceed the program required hours, is the University’s official last week of the semester. However, this must be confirmed with your agency field instructor/task supervisor and field liaison and coincide with the agency needs/requirements.
* Students should ensure that their responsibilities to agencies, clients, communities, and families are met first before exiting an agency