**Field Instructor and Agency**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q. What does the Social Work program at Texas State University School of Social Work consist of?**

* The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program prepares students for generalist social work practice. The BSW program requires a field practicum at the end of all coursework completion for a total of 420 field contact hours. BSW students are concurrently enrolled in a field practicum course (SOWK 4645) and an integrative seminar course (SOWK 4650).
* The Master of Social Work F0undation (MSWF) program is an introduction to the social work profession through one year of foundation coursework preparation with a field practicum included. MSWF students complete a foundation field practicum for a total of 360 field contact hours (SOWK 5410), concurrently with an integrative seminar course (SOWK 5411). MSWF students move into an advanced year after their second year of coursework and completion a second field practicum.
* The Maser of Social Work Advanced (MSWA) program prepares students for more specialized social work practice. The MSWA program requires a field practicum at the end of all required coursework completion for a total of 540 field contact hours. MSWA students are concurrently enrolled in a field practicum course (SOWK 5378) and an integrative seminar course (SOWK 5379, 5679, 5979).
* The MSW program is offered either as an on-campus face to face instructional program or a fully online asynchronous instructional program. The field practicum is always face to face for all program levels.
* The MSW program offers a part time option for students online. Part time allows students to complete a field practicum over the course of two semesters.

**Q: How are field education course(s) structured/designed?**

* Field practicum placements are provided to students in different agencies with different field instructors, each of which must meet the criteria and objectives for that year of field instruction. We do not place students in the same agency where they have interned as a BSW or MSWF if they are entering an MSW Advanced year placement.
* BSW and MSWF Students are assigned to a practicum that exposes them to a generalist experience, including micro, mezzo, and macro practice with a broad range of clientele.
* The MSW Advanced Year practicum is coordinated with a student’s choice specialization.
* Each field practicum course is divided into two required components:
* Field Practicum Agency Internship and
* Field Practicum Seminars.

**Q: What is Social Work Field Education?**

* Field Education is an integral part of the social work curriculum, the signature pedagogy, and a core requirement of accredited BSW and MSW programs as guided by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).
* Field Education consists of two major components: the agency practicum/internship and the integrative seminar.
* The practicum provides the social work student with an opportunity to integrate and apply course instruction, theoretical knowledge, and engage in social work practice in a social service agency setting with oversight from a credentialed social work supervisor.
* The practicum is the educational platform to practice and demonstrate application of the nine core social work competencies.

**Q: How are Agencies/Organizations selected as an internship site for students?**

* Agencies are the School’s partners in educating up and coming social work professionals, we highly value this relationship.
* Agencies/organizations serve as field practicum instruction sites based on an application process. Agencies are eligible for consideration based on their commitment to social and human service delivery for underserved persons, populations considered at risk, vulnerable, and oppressed groups.
* Agencies must have a social work professional on staff to provide social work supervision to student interns for at least one hour per week.
* Agencies services should provide learning opportunities for students to practice skills that support the nine CSWE competencies.
* Agencies must enter into an affiliation agreement with Texas State University College of Applied Arts – School of Social Work which outlines both parties commitment to the student intern.

**Q: Why do agencies accept student interns?**

* Most agencies like being affiliated with teaching institutions- the training of students is stimulating and enriching for both agency staff and the students involved.
* Most social service agencies also have a strong commitment to the training and development of future social workers, as well as helping increase the number and quality of social work professionals.
* Agencies find that providing placements for students allows them to screen, train and evaluate potential job applicants with minimal investment in personnel costs (student interns may be offered employment when they have done a good job and staff positions become vacant).

**Q: What are the requirements of supervising a student intern?**

* Students will be placed in a social service agency under the day-to-day supervision of a “field instructor” who is a credentialed social worker employed by the agency.
* It is the responsibility of field instructors to provide students with planned work opportunities to learn about various client systems, agency processes, and practical application opportunities.
* Field instructors and student interns will jointly develop an educational learning plan (ELP) as part of their field education. The Office of Field Education will provide the template for this plan.
* Student interns must receive at a minimum a one hour per week supervisory session as the time to review the ELP, planned work, performance goals, and professional development.
* Group supervision is allowed; however, individual supervision is required for the student intern more often than group supervision.

**Q: What are the credentials of a field instructor?**

* According to CSWE, it has termed field the ‘signature pedagogy’ of social work education. Therefore, the field experience and quality of onsite educational instruction by a field supervisor is of utmost importance.
* The primary field instructor of record for a BSW student must have a Bachelor or Master degree from a CSWE accredited School of Social Work and two years post graduate experience.
* The primary field instructor of record for an MSW student must have a Master’s degree from a CSWE accredited School of Social Work and two years post graduate experience.

**Q. What is the roles/titles of field education at Texas State School of Social Work.**

* **Field Instructor** – the individual who is a social work professional in the agency (BSW or MSW with two years post grad experience) where the student intern is placed. The field instructor is responsible for weekly social work supervision, the development of the ELP, and evaluation of students’ social work performance on the job.
* **Task Supervisor** – the individual in the agency who is assigned to provide the student intern with day to day assignments, tasks, and direction. The task supervisor does not have to be a social work professional but must provide the field instructor feedback on the students’ performance for a fair evaluation.
* **Field Advisor** – a Texas State University School of Social Work staff member assigned to advise, consult, and guide social work students on agency placements and opportunities. The field advisor finalizes all student internships with agencies and students.
* **Field Preceptor** – a credentialed social work professional assigned to provide students with social work supervision in the absence of an onsite field instructor. Agencies contract with a preceptor or coordinate preceptors for student interns.
* **Field Liaison** – a Texas State University School of Social Work faculty member assigned to provide educational instruction in the integrative seminar and liaise with field instructors for collaborative educational support.

**Q: How is classroom learning and field instruction integrated?**

* The very nature of field instruction fosters integration with classroom learning particularly when students meet in classroom setting to regularly to discuss what they have been learning.
* Integrative seminar, agency field visits, collaborative and on-going communication with stakeholders increase the integration of classroom and field experiences.
* Students tend to enrich their own learning by sharing relevant information they experience and compare and contrast agencies practices have come across.
* Supervision is an opportunity to integrate theory and practice.
* Students are required to attend a weekly integrative seminar either face to face, online, or a hybrid.

**Q: When does the field practicum begin and end?**

* Texas State University School of Social Work offers field education every semester (fall, spring, and summer).
* Fall and spring semester are 15-week semesters (not including holidays) and summer is a 10-week semester.
* Fall semester begins in late August and runs through early December; spring semester begins in late January and runs through early May; summer semester begins first week of June through early August.
* Part time students complete the field practicum over two semesters.

**Q: Are there specific hours students must be in the practicum internship?**

* Students are required to be available for internship placement during usual agency business hours (M-F, 8:00am – 6:00pm) in order to participate in appropriate professional learning experiences, receive professional supervision, and meet school course requirements.
* Although some field practicum agencies may offer evening and weekend hours for client service delivery and professional community learning activities, currently there are no student internships available during weekend or weeknight hours only.
* Practicum hours will be determined by the student’s course week schedule, including the field course seminars, and the agency schedule.
* Students must be supervised by a social work professional during evening and weekend hours.
* We encourage student interns to prepare a work schedule with field instructors within the first week of the internship.
* Student interns are expected to follow agency policies and procedures regarding time worked, time off, and holidays
* Student interns are required to complete a weekly timesheet documenting time worked with approval from a field instructor and submit to their field liaison.

**Q: How are students selected for agency placements?**

* The entire field placement process begins the semester prior to the semester when the student enrolls in his/her respective field course.
* Students attend field information session online or on campus and apply for the field education.
* A field advisor conducts pre-placement interviews with eligible students and reviews resumes, career goals, and students request for a placement with specific population of interest. The Field Advisor and student will review the resume, discuss interest and potential internships
* The field advisor strives to provide a placement that will challenge and broaden the student’s educational and life experiences.
* After the interview, the Field Advisor will assess current agency placements and arrange for an interview with one agency. We do not send students on multiple interviews.
* Agencies have the right of refusal if they do not feel a student is the right fit. We encourage feedback to share with the student for professional development
* If an agency is interested in offering the student a field placement, a field placement form is submitted back to the field advisor confirming the offer.
* Students are not authorized to secure their own field placements at any time nor do we share a listing of agency partners with students to find their own placements.

**Q: Can students conduct their field practicum internship at their place of employment?**

* It is the policy of the Office of Field Education that students complete the field practicum requirements in agencies where the student has never been employed or is not currently employed.
* The challenge for the student who, because of a lack of viable alternatives, wishes to complete his/her field practicum requirements at their place of employment is to propose a new learning experience within their agency for their internship.
* The student must submit a proposal with supporting documentation to the office of field education for review by the school of social work field committee. The field committee will review requests once per semester for a determination of approval.
* CSWE provides specific criteria for employer-based field practicums.

**Q: Do students have professional liability insurance?**

* All students are provided with professional liability insurance through the Texas State University School of Social Work prior to enrolling in field practicum courses.
* Upon completion of the field orientation prior, each student has a copy the insurance policy.
* Students may not begin their internship until they have completed the field orientation and secured a copy of their professional liability insurance.
* Students do not need to obtain coverage on their own.

**Q: What is Malpractice?**

* Malpractice is defined as an act of commission or omission by a professional that falls below accepted standards of care and results in or aggravates an injury to the client.
* Students in field placements are acting in a professional role that involves the responsibility to uphold the same professional, legal and ethical standards as other practicing social workers.

**Q: Can students transport clients?**

* If your agency requires a student to transport a client(s), students may only use an agency vehicle.
* Students may never transport a client alone, they should partner with an agency representative. **Texas State University is not liable for accidents**

**Q: What are the procedures to make up missed field work days?**

* In the case of illness necessitating absence from the field setting, students shall notify the Field Instructor and take responsibility for canceling or rescheduling appointments and/or meetings.
* Hours missed must be made up at a time agreed upon by student and field instructor. If the student's absence exceeds two days, the field instructor should be notified.
* If the field instructor is concerned about excessive absences or tardiness, contact the students field liaison to schedule a meeting

**Q: What if students are experiencing difficulty in their field placement?**

* It is in the best interested of the student’s professional development to receive feedback about their performance
* The field instructor should meet with the student intern, discuss the observed issues, develop a plan of action for correction, and set a date to visit with the student regarding observable changes made. A performance improvement plan may be advisable.
* We always encourage informing the field liaison of issues with student interns, even if they are not severe.
* If the problem cannot be resolved, contact the field liaison to discuss next steps.
* The Field Liaison will review the concerns with both student and Field Instructor/Supervisor before making a formal recommendation to the Field Director.

**Q: What if students have questions about their field course assignments (e.g. educational learning plan, projects, research assignments, field evaluations, etc.)**

* Students are encouraged to should speak to their Field Liaison for this information. Every student receives an integrative seminar course syllabus.
* He/she will also specify due dates for assignments and provide guidelines for work to be completed.

**Q: Do students receive a grade for field education?**

* Yes, students receive grades for the integrative seminar course from the Field Liaison.
* Students will be evaluated by Field Instructors via a midterm evaluation and final field evaluation which is measured by a pass or fail rating
* The final field evaluation is considered in the overall integrative seminar grade issues by the field liaison.
* The student must pass the field practicum and the integrative seminar components in each field course to receive a grade of credit.
* Student may refer to grading policies located in each field course syllabus for further detailed information.

**Q: What if a student has a conflict with their work schedule and their field practicum?**

* We do not encourage students to attempt to work full time while completing a full-time degree program
* Field education requirements are a priority and we do not work around students’ schedules
* Students who are employed more than 20 hours per week and who are carrying a full or part-time course load are encouraged to complete their internships as a part-time placement over two continuous semesters

**Q: What are ‘contact hours’ in the field practicum?**

* CSWE defines contact hours as direct contact with client, groups, family and community systems. Student interns can participate in activities such as supervision time, direct client work, groups, families, community meetings, trainings, orientation, professional development, activities related to the agency work, and assignments supporting the CSWE competencies.

**Q: What does NOT count as contact hours for field education?**

* Activities that cannot count towards hours include: homework assignments for seminar, seminar class, self-care activities, travel time to and from the placement, travel time to and from seminar, watching videos, YouTube, movies, book reports, and other supplemental reading not in the educational learning plan or assigned by agency, meeting on campus with field office representatives and anything not in the educational learning plan.

**Q: How can students make the most of their internship?**

* One thing all interns can discover is that participating in an internship will require a different set of skills and knowledge than those required by academic classes. One true statement about internships that can also be applied to life, is typically life gives you the test first and the lesson after.
* Interns should be proactive in engaging supervision and the overall culture and environment of the agency. This includes agency dynamics among staff, clients and overall service delivery.

**Q. How can an agency make the most of the student interns experience?**

* Field Instructor’s must set clear expectations for interns including agency policy and procedures and addressing specific learning opportunities in the educational learning plan.
* Providing a clear and concise identification of tasks and learning opportunities within the agency is important to interns in maximizing the internship experience. Field Instructor’s and other professionals within the agency have a strong influence on an intern’s successful experience and what can be retrieved for future social work practice.
* Taking the time to provide a sound orientation to agency which can be facilitated by the Field Agency Orientation Checklist is an important process in building a strong internship experience.

**Q. How are students evaluated in field education?**

* The educational learning plan (ELP) is a fluid document which incorporates the learning plan, mid- and final evaluation. Students must identify their learning interest through the creation of learning activities/task, evaluation and target dates within each of the nine CSWE competencies. Each competency includes practice behaviors which are used to create the educational learning plan.
* Interns must include a minimum of three (3) learning activities/tasks, evaluation, and target dates for each of the nine (9) CSWE competencies. The educational learning plan (ELP) is reviewed with feedback identified by the Field Instructor by assigning a point value for each learning activity at the midpoint (mid-evaluation) and at the end of the internship (final evaluation).
* The Field Instructor provides feedback and point values for each competency and then reviews this feedback with the intern. A field visit/meeting is scheduled with the field liaison, field instructor and student to review and assess progress.
* Students receive a pass/fail for the completion of the mid- and final evaluation. Students receive a performance rating which is assigned by the Field Instructor.

**Q. What if agencies require students interns to clear a background check, drug screen, medical screening or other agency related clearances?**

* The majority of agencies work with services which can provide background, drug screen, finger printing and other clearances. Students will be notified of this requirement and service by the agency where they were accepted. However, in some internships these clearances are required but the agency does not provide these services.
* Texas State University School of Social Work has acquired these services through Castle Branch. Students will visit [www.castlebranch.com](http://www.castlebranch.com) and purchase the required clearances. Field Office representatives will access the results to provide confirmation of these clearances and either inform the agency or complete an Attestation form to submit to the agency.
* Students are responsible for overseeing the completion of this process for submission to the Office of Field Education.

**Q. How does Texas State University School of Social Work support partner agencies?**

* The School of Social Work offers Field Instructor workshops and provides continuing education units (CEU) for supervising student interns. The workshops are directed towards social work professionals who serve as a field instructor within an agency.
* In addition, the School of Social Work will offer professional development opportunities at various times of the year. The professional development opportunities will address topics identified by social work professionals in the community working with an array of clients, communities, programs, services, etc.
* In addition, the School of Social Work is committed to training newly graduated social workers to prepare on becoming a field instructor. Field Instruction is an extremely important component in building strong, competent, and professional social workers. Moreover, supervision training along with other continuing education content is vital to the social work profession.

**Q. What are the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Nine Competencies?**

* The CSWE developed nine competency areas all social work students are required to demonstrate as part of a competency-based education for accredited programs. Competencies are included throughout social work education at the BSW and MSW levels.
* The nine (9) competencies are the foundation for a successful internship experience. The educational learning plan (ELP) utilizes these competencies to build a strong and meaningful internship experience. Students will visit the ELP throughout the entire internship with their field instructor, task supervisor, field liaison and within the seminar.
* The detailed competencies are found in the following link

<https://www.cswe.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Standards-and-Policies/2015-EPAS/2015EPASandGlossary.pdf.aspx>