



Field Education Handbook

Revised August 2019

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Introduction

This Field Education Handbook has been developed as a guide for students, field supervisors, and faculty to use as they participate in the field education process with the School of Social Work. Field education is an integral part of the professional social work curriculum and requires a close cooperative relationship between the School of Social Work (SSW) and the selected field sites who accept our students for the placement experience. Field education is designated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) as its signature pedagogy and is equal in standing and importance to the course work in social work higher education. Experiential learning complements the classroom learning and gives students the opportunity to build a sense of professional competence and identity that serves as a foundation for ongoing professional growth.

Located in Morgantown, West Virginia, the School of Social Work offers a BSW Program and full and part-time MSW Programs, with an online MSW program launching in Fall 2019. Our program is designed to prepare its graduates for professional generalist and advanced social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and institutions. All SSW students are governed by the same policies and guidelines described in this handbook, and all field placement sites are open to exploration by all students in our programs. It is our purpose and intent to provide consistently high-quality field education opportunities for all students. The SSW supports CSWE policies and guidelines, and the field placement policies included in this manual are designed to be consistent with our mission and CSWE guidelines.

The field placement experience could not be possible without the input and assistance from many different staff, faculty, Field Instructors, and the practice community. Thanks to all of you who have made contributions to field in the past, are contributing now, or plan to in the future. An investment in field education is an investment in the entire profession.

Welcome to the West Virginia University's School of Social Work Field Education program!

Let's go.

Mission of West Virginia University

As a land-grant institution, the faculty, staff and students at West Virginia University commit to creating a diverse and inclusive culture that advances education, healthcare and prosperity for all by providing access and opportunity; by advancing high-impact research; and by leading transformation in West Virginia and the world through local, state and global engagement.

School of Social Work

Social Work Program History & Rationale

Accredited by the Council on Social Work Education since 1942 for the MSW program and 1974 for the BSW program, the WVU School of Social Work develops leaders in solving the most demanding social issues of our day through rigorous research, academic innovation, and public service. Faculty and students are empowered to extend their reach, deepen their impact and engage in real-world social change. They learn to critically analyze personal, familial, and environmental factors affecting practice settings and practice techniques, and to advocate for those who confront barriers to achieving their fullest potential. The school's programs prepare students for careers as professional social workers committed to public service in nonprofits, government, education, business, and higher education.

BSW Mission & Program

The mission of the BSW program is to educate students to become generalist social workers. Generalist social work is grounded in the liberal arts, the person-in-environment framework, and competency-based education. Generalist social workers use a range of prevention and intervention methods in social work practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Generalist social workers identify with the profession and apply ethical principles and critical thinking at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. Generalist practitioners are strength based, engage diversity in practice, and advocate for human rights and social and economic justice. They engage in research informed practice and actively respond to the impact of context on professional practice.

Graduates of the BSW program will be prepared to:

1. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, and communities.
Model ethical and professional behavior in social work practice.
2. Apply a practice framework that engages diversity and difference while advancing human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
3. Critique practice-informed research and research-informed practice.
4. Analyze policy practice.

MSW Mission & Program

The mission of the MSW program is to educate students to become advanced integrated practice social workers. The specialization in advanced integrated practice builds on generalist practice and prepares students to integrate micro, mezzo, and macro practice skills across service sectors and within interdisciplinary teams to effectively address social and human problems pertinent to a wide range of professional practice areas. Advanced integrated practice provides an integrative approach to social work where students are prepared for both direct practice and administrative roles.

Graduates of the MSW program will be prepared to:

1. Formulate and implement integrated service delivery models appropriate to advanced practice with diverse client populations at multi-system levels.
2. Design and conduct brief and/or ongoing assessment and intervention methods consistent with integrated systems and context of practice.
3. Construct an integrated, evidence-informed theoretical framework appropriate to the level and context of practice situations.
4. Organize collaboration with other professions to coordinate intervention efforts suitable to the practice situation.
5. Design and conduct collaborative, practice-based evaluation methods and apply findings to improve practice, policy, and/or service delivery effectiveness.

Relationship of the Program to the Ethics & Values of the Profession

The School of Social Work (SSW) has the ultimate responsibility to students in making the field experience positive and fruitful, and in making final decisions regarding the field placement. The BSW and MSW Program Directors, Faculty Field Liaison, Field Education Director, and Field Instructors work together to implement the field learning process.

The purpose of field instruction, as an integral and equal part within the total curriculum, is to provide opportunities for students to apply the concepts and theories taught in the classroom to actual practice situations, thus incorporating the knowledge, values, and skills that they have studied in class in their work with actual clients, communities, and systems. Social Work program goals are incorporated into the field syllabi and related field curriculum documents with the purpose of guiding Field Instructors and students in accomplishing these goals within field experiences. As students apply themselves to practice behaviors with the guidance of experienced instructors, they gradually grow into professional practitioners. They gain a growing sense of professional competence and confidence, and are able to integrate theory with practice.

The [NASW Code of Ethics](#) provides the ethical base for social work practice and, therefore, the student, the Field Instructor, and the Faculty Field Liaison are bound by the NASW Code of Ethics throughout the field placement process. The Learning Contracts for both Generalist and Advanced placements include an acknowledged statement, affirming that all parties signing the learning contract commit to adhering to the NASW Code of Ethics. The Memorandum of Affiliation Agreement between WVU/SSW and all field placement agencies also contains such a statement for all persons who hold an academic degree and/or license in social work. A copy of the Code of Ethics is provided to students at orientation and is reviewed, discussed, and referenced within courses, and is available for free download on the internet. All placement

team members are expected to have an accessible copy of the Code of Ethics for reference throughout the placement period.

Field Instruction

Course Descriptions & Requirements

BSW/MSW Foundation-Generalist Field Experience – SOWK 491 and SOWK 581

Community-based Foundation-Generalist field placement and an integrative seminar. Students learn to apply generalist engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation skills. They develop an understanding of responding to social and human problems within a context of social work values and ethics, social justice, and affirmation of the human rights of diverse groups of people. Generalist practice in the West Virginia University School of Social Work Program serves diverse client systems using an ecosystems approach as an organizing theoretical base in understanding the rural and small town environment. Client systems may be communities, organizations, groups, families or individuals. Generalist practice is flexible and creative enough to support problem interventions that draw upon strengths, capacities and resources to determine the practice approach.

BSW - SOWK 491 Requirements

The BSW Field Experience occurs during the student's final semester of the undergraduate program, and is a 450 contact hour Generalist Placement, utilizing a "block placement" model. Students are in field placement 4 days a week, for an average of 30 hours per week, across a 15-week period, or in the case of those students opting for part-time placement, 2 days per week, for 16 hours, across 28 weeks. Students in placement also attend a concurrent 3-hour capstone Seminar during the first 15 weeks of placement.

BSW students must have successfully completed all degree requirements with a GPA of 2.0, inclusive of all Social Work courses in order to take the Senior Seminar (SOWK 494) and the Field Practicum (SOWK 491). Students with an Incomplete or below a C in any Social Work course are not permitted entry to SOWK 494 and SOWK 491. The senior seminar is a 3-credit hour capstone course and is graded with a letter grade. The Foundation-Generalist field placement experience (12 credits), taken simultaneously, is graded Pass/Fail. Failure in either SOWK 491/494 results in the student repeating both courses.

MSW – SOWK 581 Requirements

The School of Social Work MSW Program admits both Regular Standing and Advanced Standing Students. Regular Standing students are those students whose undergraduate degree is not in Social Work, or whose undergraduate social work degree is more than 8 years old. Regular Standing students are required to complete 18 credit hours of Foundation Courses plus 6 credit hours of Foundation-Generalist Field Experience within the first year of the program. Advanced standing students are not required to complete generalist courses or the Foundation-Generalist field experience. The Foundation-Generalist Field Experience consists of 16-20 hours per week, for a total of 300 minimum contact hours, plus required attendance and participation in professional seminars. The Foundation-Generalist field placement experience is graded Pass/Fail.

The required courses that make up the Foundation Curriculum are paired with the foundation placement to allow the students to experience and reflect on generalist practice, as well as to articulate concepts

and develop practice abilities that reflect our understanding of generalist practice. Students take the following courses either prior to or concurrently with the Foundation-Generalist Field Placement Experience:

- SOWK 530 Professional Identity and Social Justice
- SOWK 520 Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE)
- SOWK 540 Generalist Practice I: Individuals, Families, & Groups
- SOWK 513 Social Work Research Methods
- SOWK 531 Social Welfare Policy and Programs
- SOWK 541 Generalist Practice II: Rural Community and Organizational Practice

MSW Specialized-Advanced Field Experience – SOWK 682

Both Advanced Standing and Regular Standing students are required to complete the community-based Specialized-Advanced field placement and integrative seminar. The advanced placement builds on the foundation and advanced courses and the previous Foundation-Generalist field experience, whereby students learn to apply advanced integrated practice skills. They engage with interdisciplinary teams to address social and human problems within a context of social work values and ethics, social justice, and affirmation of the human rights of diverse groups of people. Advanced content in the placement focuses on knowledge and skills that are appropriate to specialized social work practice. During the placement experience, the student is expected to apply greater autonomy, differentiation, elaboration, and integration with respect to applying theory to practice than was expected in the generalist experience. Students in Advanced Placement are expected to concentrate more intensively and autonomously in levels of intervention which reflect elements of the advanced integrated curriculum, which includes work at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. The advanced placement is meant to prepare the student for entry into social work practice employment, and the expectation is that the student has already grasped the generalist concepts, theories and roles, as well as appropriate professional behavior.

MSW – SOWK 682 Requirements

The MSW Specialized-Advanced field experience occurs during all MSW students' final year of the program, and consists of 600 minimum on-site contact hours, at an average rate of 20 hours per week, plus required attendance and participation in professional seminars. In order to enter SOWK 682, students are required to have successfully completed their Foundation-Generalist field experience or have Advanced Standing status. Students enroll in 9 credit hours of SOWK 682, and must complete 600 contact hours. The Specialized-Advanced field experience is graded Pass/Fail.

Course Competencies (Student Learning Outcomes) & Practice Behaviors

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) specifies core competencies and associated measureable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills. The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of CSWE explains that the curriculum prepares its graduates for generalist and advanced practice through mastery of the core competencies augmented by knowledge and practice behaviors specific to a concentration.

BSW/MSW Foundation/Generalist Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of either the SOWK 491 or SOWK 581 course, students are able to:

1. Apply classroom-based knowledge, values, skills, and ethics within a community-based field education experience.
2. Engage in practice analysis and knowledge development through seminar reflection.
3. Utilize professional values, ethics and behaviors consistent with the Social Work professional Code of Ethics.
4. Develop professional identity as a social worker and a commitment to the continuing professional development.
5. Develop sensitivity, knowledge, and understanding of human needs and rights, social welfare issues, and approaches toward resolving social problems.

**The learning outcomes for this course address CSWE EPAS 2015 generalist Competencies 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9*

MSW Specialization/Advanced Integrated Learning Outcomes

SOWK 682 provides the opportunity for students to experience and participate in a variety of activities within a community agency, facility, organization or program setting, which will prepare them for advanced entry-level practice.

Upon completion of this course, students are able to:

1. Analyze and synthesize skills in engaging, assessing, intervening, and evaluating complex practice situations.
2. Model professional use of self when engaging with client or organizational systems.
3. Integrate micro, mezzo, and macro practice skills across service sectors and within interdisciplinary teams to effectively address social and human problems across a wide range of practice areas, with a particular emphasis on effective models of rural service delivery.
4. Incorporate relevant evidence-informed theories and methods with respect to practice intervention.
5. Utilize the NASW Code of ethics in responding to multi-dimensional practice contexts.

**The learning outcomes for this course address CSWE EPAS 2015 specialized Competencies 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9*

Field Seminars & Integration of Class & Field

Foundation-Generalist Field Seminars

The BSW Field Experience, which includes a concurrent 3-hour Capstone Seminar during the first 15 weeks of placement, provides the student with opportunities and experiences which demonstrate the multiple and varied roles that social workers perform, as well as day-to-day operations within social, human and health care agencies, programs and organizations. A major assignment within the BSW Field experience is a multi-part Competency Thesis, which serves to help the student articulate and demonstrate how they have successfully integrated and applied the social work skills, theories, values and beliefs in a “real world” social work practice setting. Seminar hours are not included in the 450 required placement hours.

All MSW Foundation-Generalist placement students (both full and part-time) are required to participate in professional seminars during the placement. The seminars are organized and facilitated by the Faculty Field Liaison and focus on integration of classroom theory with practice experiences. These hours are not included in the 300 total hours and are different from the students' on-site placement hours and activities, and may not be substituted for the other.

Generalist seminars will include the following discussion topics: Orientation to Field; Professional Identify as a Social Worker; Safety in the Field; Documentation; Use of Supervision; Roles and Boundaries; Social Work Ethics and Managing Ethical Dilemmas; Addressing Issues of Diversity and Difference; Conflict Resolution; Policy Practice; Evaluating Outcomes in Practice; Ending with Clients and Transitioning to Specialized-Advanced field; and Evaluating Professional Growth.

Specialized-Advanced Integrated Field Seminars

All students in Specialized-Advanced field are required to participate in professional seminars during the field placement. These hours are not included in the 600 hours and are different from the students' on-site placement hours and activities, and may not be substituted for the other.

Advanced Integrated Seminars include the following discussion topics: Orientation to Specialized-Advanced field; Skills Practice; Advanced Integrated Practice at Micro, Mezzo and Macro levels; Role of Social Work in Interprofessional Practice; Advanced Documentation Licensure; Transitioning to MSW-level Practice; and other Special Topics determined though class discussion.

Learning Contract

The Learning Contract is a living document that reflects the evolving learning needs of the student, their placement agency, and the social work profession, and gives students direction and guidance during field placements. This individualized plan incorporates diverse contributions from the Field Instructor, student, and Faculty Field Liaison. They are developed by the student, with input from field faculty during the first 3-4 weeks of placement, and set the stage for evaluating student abilities, performance, and progress. The Learning Contract also includes a small number of required activities for all students relating to competencies.

Agency Orientation

The SSW requires that each placement site provides an agency orientation for students completing their field education experiences at the agency. The orientation should include a tour of the agency and a series of brief presentations to help the student gain a greater understanding of the mission, services, and activities for which the agency is responsible. Orientation packets are also encouraged to provide students with written documentation, policies, and relevant materials that the student can review and keep as reference materials over the course of the placement.

Responsibilities & Rights of the Student

The student, with the support of the Field Faculty Liaison and the Field Instructor, has the main responsibility for their own learning and is expected to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of the field instruction experience. During the field placement, the student is expected to maintain the same ethical standards and practices as professional staff.

Student specific requirements include the following:

- a) Attend required Field Education Orientation sessions for foundation and advanced placements, and follow all field placement instructions in a timely fashion. This includes discussion with advisor of appropriate placement choices.
- b) Make Field Instructor aware of any pertinent information that may affect the student's ability to learn.
- c) Advocate for self in pursuit of learning. The student is often responsible for the initial drafting of the learning contract and discussion with Field Instructor so that it can be finalized for submission to the Field Office and Faculty Field Liaisons by the specified deadline date.
- d) Adhere to the agreed upon items in the learning contract, including required reports, etc. The student is required to participate in conferences with the faculty liaison during the placement.
- e) Clarify with the agency any expectations related to transportation of clients and insurance coverage for these purposes.
- f) Respect client/agency confidentiality and abide by the NASW Code of Ethics.
- g) Engage in appropriate termination activities with clients and agency at any point placement ends.
- h) Use of Supervision: The student is expected to prepare for and participate in regular conferences with the Field Instructor, focusing on the student's learning and application of social work concepts. To foster the integration of class and field, the student is expected to share with the Field Instructor course materials and syllabi in addition to appropriate classroom discussions and experiences. The student uses this professional tutorial relationship as a constructive tool in their total educational program.
- i) The student should take responsibility for a clear understanding between the agency, the student, and the School about the student's use of agency material in the classroom.
- j) The student must take responsibility for becoming a part of the field instruction setting and participate as a responsible member of the staff. The student is expected to be punctual and accountable for their time. A planned weekly time schedule should be developed by the Field Instructor with the student. [Monthly Time Reports](#) that document the student's activities and hours are used during field placements.
- k) Attendance at meetings and conferences in the agency and community are encouraged. The student should take advantage of appropriate opportunities to broaden the learning experience within the field instruction placement consistent with educational and service obligations.

Responsibilities & Rights of the Agency Field Instructor

Placement Site Field Instructor

The process of field instruction is designed to foster the student's acquisition, application, and progressive development of professional knowledge and skills. The Field Instructor is a teacher and a role model, and serves as the representative of the field placement site, regardless of whether the Field Instructor is on site or off-site.

Field Instructors (FI) take on significant professional educational responsibilities that include: Working with students to develop and implement the learning contract for field instruction; Providing appropriate learning experiences to enable the student to develop and integrate theoretical concepts with practice skills; Developing a placement schedule with the student and holding them accountable for meeting placement expectations; Providing an hour-long supervisory session each week in addition to informal interaction throughout the week; and Providing initial and continuing assessment of the student's level of knowledge, educational needs and interest, in cooperation with the faculty liaison.

Importantly, Field Instructors complete a mid-term and final evaluation of the student's progress using the [evaluation form](#) provided by the SSW, and discuss with the Faculty Field Liaison any serious problems that may arise. They assist the SSW in periodic evaluations of the appropriateness of the setting for providing sound educational learning/practice experiences for placement student, while also attending and participating in necessary meetings and training opportunities offered by the SSW for Field Instructors.

Field Instructors must bring the following experience and credentials: A graduate level social work degree from an accredited Social Work Program and a minimum of 2 years post Master's Degree social work-related work experience.

Off-site/External Field Instructors

From time to time, situations arise where there may not be an individual within the specific program, department, or agency that could serve as the Placement Site Field Instructor. In those instances, the SSW will utilize an external or independent Field Instructor that meets all of the standard criteria to serve as a Field Instructor. All parties, including the agency/program administrator, must agree to this arrangement. The Off-site/External FI must also participate in the new Field Instructor training session.

The supervisory requirements and frequency schedule for Off-site/External Field Instructor are the same as for traditional Field Instructors. However, dependent upon the geographic distance and other related issues, up to two of the weekly supervisory sessions each month may be conducted virtually (conference call, video conference, zoom, etc.). Additionally, in-person supervision sessions may also be conducted at an appropriate alternative site, but never in either parties home if necessary due to logistical challenges. All other supervisory sessions must be conducted face-to-face and at the field placement site.

**To decrease the potential for dual relationships and/or conflicts of interest as per the NASW Code of Ethics, at no time may a Faculty Field Liaison also serve as a Field Instructor for the same student within the same placement setting, and/or in the same agency in which s/he is employed (Adjunct Liaisons). The utilization of a Site Supervisor does not nullify this policy.*

Site Supervisor

In situations where an appropriate placement field site does not have an individual who meets the requirements to be an approved Field Instructor on site, the SSW allows for an on-site, professional staff person to serve in the role of Site Supervisor, and provide primary supervision for the BSW or MSW student placement. The Site Supervisor must be knowledgeable about the agency setting, its programs, policies, intervention strategies and tactics; social work roles and functions; and must be willing to and have the time for undertaking the teaching role.

Assignment of a Site Supervisor for any social work student does not preclude the need for an approved and trained BSW or MSW level Field Instructor to provide consistent, weekly supervision to students. The policies for selection of Field Instructors and Site Supervisors serve to set the minimum expectations for supervision of students in the agency and thus strengthen the SSW's ability to maintain a high quality educational experience for students.

To be accepted as a Site Supervisor for a BSW student, an individual must have the following: A bachelor's or master's degree in an allied field such as psychology or counseling (other similar degrees considered); A minimum of 2 years of post-degree experience in the field; and been an employee of the agency for no less than 6 months.

To be accepted as a Site Supervisor for a MSW student, an individual must have the following: A graduate degree in an allied field such as psychology or counseling (other similar degrees considered); A minimum of 2 years of post-degree experience in the field; and been an employee of the agency for no less than 6 months.

**To decrease the potential for dual relationships and/or conflicts of interest as per the NASW Code of Ethics, at no time may a Site Supervisor also serve as a Faculty Field Liaison for same student within the same placement setting. The availability of a Field Instructor does not nullify this policy.*

Responsibilities & Rights of the Field Directors/Field Faculty

Field Education Director

The Field Education Director (FED) serves as the focal point for the development of a field instruction program that is educationally based on identified curricular objectives, and includes both administrative and curricular responsibilities. In fulfilling this role, the Director establishes effective relationships with the SSW Director, MSW and BSW Program Directors, faculty, Field Instructors, practitioners, students, and support staff.

Using the policies established by the faculty of the School, the FED develops and oversees the implementation of appropriate procedures for all aspects of Field Education; evaluates both potential and existing placement sites and Field Instructors in consultation with Faculty Field Liaisons, other key stakeholders, and using relevant evaluation data; Advocates for the quality of the field education experience to all relevant groups and individuals; Serves as a resource for solving problems that may interfere with successful completion of field education; and Maintains on-going ties with field community and develops avenues for communication between field community and academic faculty.

Faculty Field Liaison

The faculty member who serves as Faculty Field Liaison (FFL) carries the major responsibility for placement agency contact regarding the design, implementation, and evaluation of the field placement. Agency visits by the FFL include a monitoring and coordinating function designed to assure that social work learning opportunities are made available.

The FFL is expected to make a minimum of one on-site visit during the Foundation-Generalist placement for full-time students, one visit during the summer Foundation-Generalist placement period for part-time

students, and two visits during the Specialized-Advanced placement, one each semester. Additional visits may be made at any time a need is identified by any participant. FFL may conduct site visits virtually (Zoom, Skype, Facetime, etc.) for online program students and when travel time to the site exceeds an hour each way.

While engaging in this role, the FFL develops and maintains collaborative relationships between agencies and the SSW by: Clarifying the educational and administrative expectations of the student, agency and school; Maintaining consultative and evaluative communication with the agency and students; Facilitating and assisting in the integration of classroom material and practice experience; and Clarifying and reinforcing the educational role of the Field Instructor. The FFL also participates with the Field Instructor and student in the evaluation of student performance, awards the final field instruction grade, and serves as the first point of contact in situations where problems occur in field learning.

BSW Faculty Field Liaisons bring the following experience and credentials: A graduate level social work degree from an accredited Social Work Program; A minimum of 2 years post Master's Degree social work-related work experience; and experience serving as a School Faculty Member, Field Instructor or Adjunct Instructor.

MSW Faculty Field Liaisons bring the following experience and credentials: A graduate level social work degree from an accredited Social Work Program; A minimum of 2 years post Master's Degree social work-related work experience; and experience serving as a School Faculty Member, Field Instructor or Adjunct Instructor.

**To decrease the potential for dual relationships and/or conflicts of interest as per the NASW Code of Ethics, at no time may a Faculty Field Liaison also serve as a Field Instructor for the same student within the same placement setting, and/or in the same agency in which s/he is employed (Adjunct Liaisons).*

Field Instruction Policies and Procedures

Selection of Field Agencies

In selecting agencies as potential settings for field instruction, the SSW looks for evidence of commitment to social work principles and values, as well as a commitment by the setting to the learning needs of the student. The following criteria is utilized in the selection process:

1. The agency accepts professional education for social work as part of the philosophy and practice of the agency and is willing to work collaboratively with the School to maximize the educational nature of the field placement.
2. The agency has qualified and available employees who are interested in providing field instruction and who meet the criteria and standards of the SSW.
3. The agency is willing to accept the student as a learner and to provide appropriate learning experiences. It will maximize the student's opportunity to have assignments which include work with clients of different races, genders, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, income levels, and physical/mental abilities.

4. The student is accepted as a participant in the overall agency program and activities as appropriate. A supportive learning environment would include opportunities to participate in staff meetings, interagency meetings, in-service training, and other opportunities for professional learning.
5. Students should be provided with the proper physical environment and equipment, including phone, desk, and a private space for interviewing clients, office supplies, clerical services, etc. The student is reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of agency responsibilities, such as travel and special agency activities.
6. The agency must agree to treat all information, including evaluations of students, as confidential. According to the provision of the Buckley Amendment to the 1974 Family Rights and Privacy Act, the student must give written permission for the SSW or agency to release data concerning their attendance history or performance record.
7. The agency must be willing to allow students to use case records and other appropriate material, with confidentiality protected, in classroom discussions and assignments.
8. The agency must be willing to adjust the field supervisor's schedule to permit time to plan student's program, attend field seminars, prepare for and hold supervisory conferences, and generally supervise the student's field placement progress.

Circumstances that may exclude agencies from consideration include the following:

- Certain private practice settings where student's exposure to a variety of evidence-based theoretical interventions, activities and practices would be limited
- Agencies owned and/or operated by student's relatives, either by birth or marriage
- Agencies whose sole purpose is for the employment and coordination of independent contractors for time-limited services
- Student's self-employment
- Agencies without formal operating policies and implemented procedures
- Agencies which are under investigation or have been sanctioned for fraudulent or unethical activities, or are under investigation or named in legal action related to alleged unethical, unlawful or negligent social work practice

Field Site Application & Review Process

In accordance with the Council of Social Work Education accreditation standards, the following field site application and review process has been implemented.

The Field Site Approval process is as follows

- 1) Individuals wishing to submit an agency, organization, or program for consideration as an approved field site for social work students, must complete an online [New Agency Application](#).
- 2) Upon receipt of the completed Application, the Field Education Director (FED) schedules and conducts a site visit (1-2 hours), dependent upon the size of the agency, number of programs seeking approval, etc. Virtual site visits using Zoom/Skype/etc. are acceptable for agency locations more than an hour away from Morgantown, WV.
- 3) Once the site visit is completed, if the FED feels the agency or program is appropriate as a social work field site, a Field Site Review Report is submitted to SSW Faculty with a recommendation to move forward with them as an approved site, and requesting both review and feedback from faculty.

- 4) The FED will take faculty feedback into consideration prior to approving an agency as a field placement site. If further discussion based on faculty feedback is needed to make the determination, the FED will bring the item to either the BSW or MSW Committee for discussion.
- 5) Once the agency has been deemed appropriate for student placements by the FED, the Field Office then facilitates with WVU's General Counsel's the process of establishing a Memorandum of Affiliation (MOA) with the organization. In the event the agency is a WVU affiliate, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be established following the same process. **Please note that any and all changes in the MOA language by the field site, must be reviewed and approved by WVU's General Counsel's office, which could delay the approval process, and potentially the student's placement start date.*
- 6) Upon return of the MOA/MOU, signed by the Agency Director, the Field Office then obtains the appropriate signatures from WVU administrators, and then emails a copy of the MOA/MOU to the agency. A digital copy of the MOA/MOU is maintained on a SSW secure server.

As per University policy and liability insurance guidelines, **no student may begin logging field placement hours until a fully-executed MOA or MOU is received by the SSW and the student is enrolled in the appropriate field course.**

Selection Criteria for Agency Field Instructors

The Council on Social Work Education requires either a BSW or MSW from a CSWE-accredited social work program and two years of post-social work degree experience in social work to supervise BSW students, and an MSW from a CSWE-accredited social work program and two years of post-social work degree experience in social work to supervise MSW students (See EPAS B2.2.9 and M2.2.9). Individuals meeting the minimum CSWE requirements for BSW and/or MSW supervision are considered for Field Instructor roles with the SSW. Individuals interested in supervising students and providing supervision to social work students during field education experiences will first complete the online [Field Instructor Interest Application](#). Following their application submission, the individual will be contacted and interviewed to determine their substantive areas of expertise and to discuss their interest in becoming a Field Instructor and supervising students. Following the interview and discussion, the FED will determine the appropriateness of their service as a Field Instructor, which student types they could appropriately supervise, and the potential placement site where they would supervise students. Field Instructor applications are maintained electronically on a secure SSW server.

Field Placement Schedules

Field Instructors are expected to establish a weekly schedule with students and make clear to students what the expectations of the agency are regarding hours, taking into account the student's class schedule. Regular business hours (8am – 6pm) during the Monday through Friday work week are encouraged for placements due to increased agency, client, Field Instructor and community engagement during this time period.

The student's schedule may reflect variations in relation to assignments, such as fulfilling evening, weekend or on-call responsibilities. It is important that there is a considerable overlap of time when the Field Instructor and student are working during the same hours. Appropriate access to field instruction must be available so that the Field Instructor may directly observe the work of the student and provide feedback and direction. If and when weekend or evening hours are part of the student's schedule, it is

also important that the experience offers rich experiences that are professionally appropriate to the student's learning needs.

The Field Instructor and the student may jointly modify the placement schedule to accommodate for University and agency sanctioned holidays or recesses. Student schedules may also be adjusted to compensate for over-time hours and/or hour shortages caused by illness or other approved absences, as long as the minimum field experience requirements of hours and tasks are met. Students should discuss scheduling requests with the Field Instructor in advance when possible, with specific permission for extended absences of more than one week discussed and requested from the Field Instructor and Faculty Field Liaison.

Field Instructor Training

The SSW provides new Field Instructors with online education modules through a WVU online training platform as part of their onboarding. The completion of the online series of training modules is required for new WVU-SSW Field Instructors, even if they have served in the same capacity with other educational institutions. The training modules cover the following content areas: Placement process and overview of field education; agency orientation components, supervision expectations; ethical issues; learning contract development and evaluation completion, and technology standards in Social Work. Field Instructors complete an assessment at the end of each module and may receive continuing education credits at no cost for their completion. The SSW also works to offer other no cost continuing education opportunities to Field Instructors as a token of appreciation for the important service they are providing to students, the SSW, and the greater social work community. Field Instructors are also required to review the Field Education Manual as part of their onboarding, and sign-off on their review with the Field Office.

Field Education Placement Process

A matching process is used by the field office to refer both BSW and MSW students to their Foundation-Generalist and Specialized-Advanced placement sites. This process enables the field office to be responsive to students with specific interests and needs, and to also consider the needs of the student cohort. This also incorporates the Field Team and SSW faculty's community knowledge in contributing to the experiences available to students.

Students are required to use the listing of approved, affiliated, and active field sites provided by the field office. Students are not permitted to secure or finalize their placements, but may recommend or suggest agencies or sites which may not be included on the approved list, with the understanding that any new site must complete the standard application and review process. This is to provide students a placement where the sites and Field Instructor have committed to the expectations and standards described in this manual. **Students should only initiate contact with potential field settings regarding placement after consulting with the Field Office.**

Placement Steps

Step 1: Approximately 6-9 months prior to the established placement start timeframe, students are required to **attend a Field Education Orientation session** to acquaint them with the matching process for field placement. During this session, the variables used in the matching process, which include the educational objectives of the program, the student's learning needs, the opportunities available at the

agency (including the evaluation of employer-based proposals), and any specific issues related to location or special needs, are thoroughly discussed. Students are also provided with further details on placement options to assist them in identifying their preferred placement sites.

Step 2: All students, including BSW and MSW and Full-Time and Part-Time, **complete the online [Student Field Placement & Interest Application](#)**. This application provides students with the opportunity to describe their background, experience, and learning goals, and takes into consideration their personal concerns and needs during the referral process. Students will indicate the client populations, practice settings, and practice activities that they are most interested in engaging. Students will also have the opportunity to indicate their preferred placement agencies and geographic locations, including new placement sites to potentially cultivate, and submit an up-to-date resume.

If the student is proposing an employer-based placement, they will submit an [Employer-Based Field Education Proposal](#) as part of their online application. The Field Office will evaluate the proposal presented by the student to determine if it meets the SSW's policy. Due to the due diligence required in reviewing, these proposals should be submitted before the general application deadline. It is suggested that the student consult with both the agency administrators and the SSW Field Office at an early stage to collect input for shaping a viable plan.

Step 3: Following the application deadline, the **Field Office begins the matching process**. Students will be paired with the best site available, based on site availability, student interests and limitations, such as transportation access, and the perspectives of the field team regarding agency/student fit.

Step 4: After the matching process has been completed, a **Placement Match Packet** is emailed to the selected Field Instructor/agency and student simultaneously. The packet includes Student and Field Instructor Referral letters and a Placement Confirmation Form.

Step 5: After receiving the Student Referral Letter (included in the match packet), the **student contacts the agency to schedule and conduct an interview**. During the interview, both student and potential Field Instructor will assess the appropriateness of this placement. Both have the option of declining the placement if it is not a good match for either.

Step 6: After the interview, the Field Instructor and student will **complete and sign the Placement Confirmation Form** to indicate agreement/disagreement to the placement. **Once this form has been received in the field office, the placement is final**. Failure to return the form promptly may delay placement and/or start dates.

* Although students matched for their Foundation-Generalist placement will typically receive a packet for a single agency, students matched for their Specialized-Advanced placement may be matched with more than one agency and receive more than one packet, depending on their interests and the competitive nature of agency placement openings. Students receiving more than one Placement Match Packet should proceed in interviewing with each agency to determine the best fit for their Specialized Advanced Placement, and finalizing their placement with one of the agencies.

**Students participating in specific programs, such as RIBHT or Title IV-E, may be required by their program to consult with their academic advisor prior to finalizing their field placement site, and discuss their career goals, learning needs, and how the selected placement site will best facilitate this learning. All students are required to inform their academic advisor of their finalized placement site before they

formally begin.

If either party does not accept the placement, the field office should be called to discuss the reasons for the decision. The Field Education Director will reassess the situation and work to find another option for the student; steps 3-6 will then be repeated until a suitable placement is found. If a student wishes to dispute a decision made during the placement process, they may bring the matter to the attention of the Field Education Director and may petition the MSW Curriculum Committee in writing.

Other Placement Policies & Considerations

New Site Approval: If the student believes that an appropriate choice is not available after careful exploration of approved agencies, the student may contact the Field Education Director to discuss the possibility of seeking approval for a new site. The FED will evaluate the request and decide whether to pursue approval based on the same criteria used to evaluate other requests for affiliation, which also includes applicability for future students. **Students should encourage potential new sites to complete the [New Agency Application](#) and [Field Instructor Interest Application](#) when appropriate.**

Geographic Boundaries: The SSW encourages field education experiences to occur within a reasonable distance to that of the student's geographic base to minimize travel and time hardships, which includes their residence, work, and/or WVU classes. In situations where there is a compelling personal circumstance or a unique opportunity that is a significant distance from the student's geographic base, this may be waived.

Inability to Place: If a placement has not been finalized after multiple interviews due to documented concerns regarding the student's presentation or readiness, the student will be required to meet with their academic advisor, the Field Education Director, and the MSW Program Director, and/or the situation and student may be referred to the appropriate committee for an Academic Review.

Students with Disabilities and/or Special Needs

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. WVU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. The field education experience concurs with West Virginia University's commitment and expects to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication and mutual respect. Any suggestions as to how to further such an environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in field or field seminars, please contact the appropriate instructor and make appropriate arrangements with [WVU Accessibility Services](#). If accommodations are necessary for a particular class, it is the student's responsibility to contact Accessibility Services to register and make appropriate arrangements.

Accessibility Services will contact appropriate instructors and inform them of the agreed upon accommodations. It is the instructor's responsibility to provide students with all necessary accommodations as outlined by Accessibility Services. In the absence of such documentation, instructors are not responsible for providing accommodations.

WVU recognizes the diversity of its students, many of whom must be absent from class to participate in days of special concern. Students must notify their instructors prior to the event regarding religious observances that will affect their attendance. Further, students must abide by the attendance policy of their instructors as stated in their syllabi. Faculty will make reasonable accommodation for assignments that a student misses as a result of religious observance.

Employment-Based Field Placement

Employment-Based Field Placement *(current or former)*

The SSW makes available the option of field placement where students are employed available, with particular attention played to the student's learning opportunities outside of their role as an employee. For maximum educational growth, it is important that students be exposed to a range and diversity of practice experiences to support their professional development process. Proposals for Foundation-Generalist or Specialized-Advanced placements in a student's place of employment, or previous employment, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The agency and student must be able to create and support an educationally based field learning experience as defined below.

It is highly recommended that Regular Standing students do one of the field placement experiences at a site other than their place of employment. For example, if a student has done their Foundation-Generalist placement at their place of employment, it is preferred that their future placements are completed within a non-employer-based setting. Due to the nature of the program, Title IV-E students are the only exception to this policy.

The following policies regarding employer-based field placements are in accordance with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Accreditation Standards and are designed to help recognize the role transition that is expected of employees who are engaging in employer-based field experiences in these circumstances.

1. Proposed field instruction assignment must be appropriate to the level of education that the student is pursuing, and meet curriculum requirements.
2. The agency employs qualified social work staff, meets the established criteria for affiliated agencies in the program, completes the Application and Review Process, and has, or agrees to enter into, an Affiliation Agreement with the University.
3. An individual who meets the criteria to be an approved Placement Field Instructor is available to supervise the placement activities. This person may not be the student's current employment supervisor, even if they carry the required social work credentials to be a Field Instructor. If off-site or from another program within the placement agency, the proposed placement Field Instructor must be approved by all parties involved in the placement. All persons who will be supervising the student's placement activities must have attended within the past 2 years, or agrees to attend Field Instructor Training. This is designed to help recognize the role transition that is expected of employees who are attending the School of Social Work under these arrangements. When engaged in instructional assignments this includes a change from a worker-supervisor relationship to a learner-teacher relationship. It also implies a sincere effort to avoid jeopardizing the student's opportunity to utilize work experience for the purpose of learning.

4. The student's assignment must differ significantly from the previous and current tasks and roles as an employee. So the student may be perceived in the student role in the setting, rather than their employee role, it is encouraged that the student be in a different location as much as possible. Student must develop a detailed proposal that clearly outlines the specific activities, tasks, and new learning opportunities that are anticipated, compared to their current position and previous employment. These learning opportunities must also be appropriate to the level and focus of the placement. Part of this proposal is a draft placement schedule that clearly separates the placement activities and time from the work duties and classroom obligations.
5. The agency administrator must provide written endorsement of the rationale of the student's proposal, and agreement with the SSW's goal of providing a professional educationally-based learning experience, rather than performing needed tasks for the agency. The student, their employer supervisor, and the agency administrator, Field Instructor, and Field Education Director must all agree to the proposed arrangement and provide their signatures before the proposal will be considered.

If a student begins a new job before the scheduled placement start date, they may submit a proposal to use the new work site, but not the new job, as an employer-based placement. To be considered, the student must have successfully completed any required employment probationary period. If a different placement site has already been finalized, the student must request to the Field Education Director to be released from this commitment.

Students who have already started their field placements in another setting, and then secure employment in a site where they would like to propose an employer-based placement, must have the approval of the original placement site to be released from their commitment. Changing placement sites due to job changes may only be done at the end of the current semester. This is a matter of professionalism and continuity for the current placement site and clientele, and should be considered the same as having to provide a professional resignation notice. Employer-based or community-based sites that do not lend themselves to an appropriate learning experience will not be approved.

Excluded Employer-based placements include:

- Very small or highly specialized, private practice settings
- Agencies owned and/or operated by student's relatives, either by birth or marriage
- Agencies whose sole purpose is for the employment and coordination of independent contractors for time limited services
- Student's self-employment
- Agencies without formal operating policies and procedures in place
- Agencies that are under investigation or have been sanctioned for fraudulent or unethical activities by their accrediting bodies

The following examples illustrate problematic employer-based field education settings.

- The agency and agency staff are very small making it difficult to distinguish employee and student roles.
- The student has worked for the agency for a considerable period of time with no experience elsewhere
- Conflicts of interest would exist between the student and the proposed Field Instructor

- Potential conflicts of interest or dual relationships exist (e.g. more than one student in the Social Work program works at the agency, requests an employer-based placement, and is in a supervisor/supervisee relationship with the other student)

Partially Paid Internships & Agency Stipends

Depending on the field agency and their resources, students may receive financial support during their field placement in the form of a stipend or partial payment for their placement hours from the agency. These funds are typically provided to support student transportation costs, meals, etc. A partially paid placement or stipend from the agency does not qualify as an employer-based placement and the arrangement is made between the student and agency, with the student bearing the responsibility to complete any and all tax-related documentation and verification. Although a stipend or partial payment does not need approval from the Field Office, students are encouraged to discuss the arrangement with the Field Office to ensure the student's academic and field requirements are prioritized

Dual Degree Field Experiences

The time frame, settings, and minimum requirements for field instruction for all students enrolled in dual degree programs, such as MSW/MPA, must conform to the standards of the SSW, as well as to the other program's standards.

Students who are in the MSW/MPA dual degree program should consult with their academic advisor and begin planning for their field education requirements for both programs from the beginning. A student's plan must be approved by both programs. Depending on the placement, some Specialized-Advanced Social Work placements may be allowed to count toward Public Administration requirements. It is appropriate for the student to follow the placement selection process in the social work program and design the placement to meet expectations of the social work program, and then seek concurrent approval from the MPA program for the placement plan.

Regular Standing students must complete the Foundation-Generalist (6 total credit hours) and Specialized-Advanced Field Placement (9 credit hours) Experiences for the Social Work Program and should consult with both their Social Work and Public Administration Academic Advisors to discuss the appropriate registration process. Dual degree students should note that the Foundation-Generalist Placement does not incorporate Public Administration content.

The Advanced Placement will combine both Social Work and Public Administration content with the specific activities and number of required hours for Advance Integrated Field Education. Students will need to work with both Programs' Academic Advisors to develop a placement plan which meets both Social Work and Public Administration requirements.

Field Hours & Monthly Time Reports

SOWK 491 – BSW - Foundation-Generalist Placement

The BSW Field Experience occurs during the student's final semester of the undergraduate program, and is a 450 contact hour Foundation-Generalist Placement that utilizes a block placement model. During the Spring semester of their senior year, students are in field placement 4 days a week, for approximately 32 hours per week for 15 weeks, and also attend a concurrent 3-hour Capstone Seminar during that time. All students will receive additional, detailed information regarding field placement requirements during Field Education Orientations scheduled during the academic year.

SOWK 581 – MSW - Foundation-Generalist Placement

300 total hours (300 placement hours + seminar)

Full Time Program: Students will enroll in SOWK 581 for 3 credit hours in Fall, and for 3 credit hours in Spring of Year One. Students begin foundation field at mid-term of the first Fall semester in the program and complete the placement by the end of the Spring semester. Students are expected to complete approximately 16 hours per week for 20 weeks to reach the required minimum of 300 on site hours. This placement occurs while students are enrolled in a full time class schedule of four courses.

Part Time Program: Students begin their Foundation-Generalist field in the Summer semester of Year One and complete in in Fall of Year Two. Students enroll in SOWK 581 for 3 credits in Summer and 3 credits in the Fall. The required integrative field seminars are scheduled during both Summer and Fall semesters. Students are expected to complete approximately 12-16 hours per week for 25 weeks to reach the required minimum of 300 on site hours. See *Appendix A: Field Education Schedule*

SOWK 682 – Specialized-Advanced Integrated Placement

600 Total Hours (600 Placement Hours + Seminar)

Specialized-Advanced field placement requires 600 hours for all students enrolled in the program, regardless of full-time or part time, or regular or advanced standing.

Full-Time Program: Students will enroll in SOWK 682 for 4 credits in Fall and 5 credits in Spring semester of Year Two. All students take the advanced research course (SOWK 616) during the Spring semester of Specialized-Advanced field. Student will be in their field placement between 16-24 per week, depending on the student's schedule and the needs of the agency, and may not consistently drop below 16 hours per week. Students may not finish their placement more than two weeks before the end of the Spring semester, due to the concurrent course assignments in the Advanced Research Course. Full-time students attend three required seminars in both Fall and Spring.

Part-Time Program: Students will enroll in SOWK 682 for 3 credits in Fall, 3 credits in Spring, and 3 credits in Summer semester of Year Two (advanced standing) or Year Three (regular standing). All students take the advanced research course during the Spring semester of Specialized-Advanced field. Student will be in their field placement between 16-20 per week, depending on the student's schedule and the needs of the agency, and may not consistently drop below 16 hours per week. Students may not finish their placement more than two weeks before the end of the Spring semester, due to the concurrent course assignments in the Advanced Research Course. Part-time students attend three required seminars in both Fall and Spring, with no seminars during their final Summer semester.

Time Reports

[Bi-Weekly Time Reports](#) (BSW) and [Monthly Time Reports](#) (MSW) enable the student to document their weekly activities and placement time. Time reports are submitted to Field Instructors each reporting period and are required to ensure activity and time keeping and ongoing accountability.

MSW students submit via email their completed and approved Monthly Time Reports by the 5th of each following month to their Field Instructor, Faculty Field Liaison, and the Field office (swfield@mail.wvu.edu) simultaneously.

BSW students submit via email their completed and approved Bi-weekly Time Reports by the 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month for the two weeks prior, to their Field Instructor, Faculty Field Liaison, and the Field office (swfield@mail.wvu.edu) simultaneously.

Evaluation Process

Evaluation of the student's performance in the placement agency by the Field Instructor is an on-going process through which the student receives continual assessment of their performance. Formal evaluations of the student's performance occur at mid-point and ending of each placement. During both the Foundation-Generalist and Specialized-Advanced placements, both the student and the Field Instructor complete written evaluations at mid-term and one to two weeks prior to the end of the placement. Student will share their self-evaluations with their Field Instructors prior to the instructor's evaluation development to better inform the assessment and give voice to areas of concern, opportunity, or challenge.

It is imperative that the Field Instructor notifies the Faculty Field Liaison by the mid-point of the placement if there is any indication that the student's performance is less than satisfactory. In most instances where performance has been marginal, it is expected that discussions between Faculty Field Liaison, Field Instructor, and student will have occurred before the formal evaluation.

During any evaluative process, students are expected to participate actively in the discussion. Should disagreements occur, the student has the right to submit a written appeal, to be attached to the Field Instructor's evaluation and included in the student's school record. Prior to emailing it to the Faculty Field Liaison, the student must read and sign the written evaluation, and the Field Instructor must also sign. Electronic copies of final evaluations are maintained with the student's academic record.

Evaluating Student Performance

Evaluation of student performance is an ongoing activity that is built into the instructional and supervisory process. As students may be anxious about the assessment process, it is helpful to discuss with students what occurs during the evaluation conference and what they might be expected to discuss. Close supervision of the student is essential in developing an accurate performance evaluation. However, evaluation of student performance must not be viewed exclusively as an externally imposed assessment. Students must develop the ability to assess their own growth and learning, to recognize their strengths and areas needing improvement, and to evaluate their practice abilities--both in general and as related to specific intervention efforts.

Field Instructors are encouraged to provide candid feedback and to be objective in their assessments when the Faculty Field Liaison conducts a site visit, providing both positive comments and constructive critique. Students cannot maximize their professional development and monitor their own performance in the absence of honest and balanced feedback. The grading system for the placement is Pass/Fail to encourage a more candid discussion of student performance during evaluation sessions and also permits those involved to address field instruction elements that are not readily translated into letter-grade outcomes.

Prior to submitting the evaluation to the Faculty Field Liaison, the Field Instructor and, when utilized, the Site Supervisor, also signs the evaluation. At the close of the evaluation session, the Faculty Field Liaison also signs the evaluation form and assigns a grade of pass or fail based on the evaluation. Students are provided the right to appeal the final grade as outlined in WVU' s [Student Conduct Code](#).

Grading Policy

Because performance in field instruction is a critical indicator of the student's readiness to assume professional responsibilities, and field instruction is a major formal requirement (12 or 16 credit hours), SSW faculty will only grant academic credit to students whose course work meets minimum acceptability standards. Students must earn a Pass/Satisfactory grade for both Foundation-Generalist and Specialized-Advanced placements in field instruction in order to complete candidacy for the Bachelor of Social Work or Master of Social Work degrees.

Field Education is graded on a pass/fail basis. Students must achieve passing ratings on field evaluations and must demonstrate satisfactory participation in course seminars. Attendance at all scheduled seminars is required in order for students to pass these courses. If a student cannot attend a scheduled seminar, they must work out an alternate way to make up the time that is acceptable to the individual instructor. To earn a passing grade in a Field Experience courses, students must have done the following:

- 1) Completed the required field hours for the appropriate section, either SOWK 491, SOWK 581 or SOWK 682;
- 2) Completed and submitted the appropriate Time Reports;
- 3) Completed and approved the appropriate field Learning Contract; and
- 4) Achieved satisfactory ratings on field evaluations.

Seminar Participation expectations include the following:

- Participation in class discussion and exercises.
- Timely completion of all assignments.
- Being prepared for discussion of assigned weekly topics, which includes bringing examples from field placement to facilitate discussion.
- Responding to questions posed in class.
- Asking relevant questions.
- Being a respectful listener when others are speaking.
- Using respectful language appropriate to a professional academic setting.
- Respectfully presenting alternative views to those raised by class readings, other students, or the professor.
- Making comments that encourage other speakers.
- Offering comments that clarify or summarize ongoing class discussion.

- Making contributions which demonstrate connections you discover between material in field, courses and other experiences you have encountered.

Evaluation of Field Instruction/Field Agency

At periodic times throughout the placement, the Field Office will solicit feedback from students regarding their placements through anonymous online surveys. These surveys are designed to capture information regarding the students' agency orientations, trainings, supervision and client engagement activities, and flag concerns or challenges in a neutral manner. Students have the option to provide their name and to also request that someone follow-up with them regarding their responses. Upon review of a follow-up request, Field Office staff will follow up with the student, Field Instructor, and/or Faculty Field Liaison to better understand the situation and prompt resolution.

Evaluation of Placement Site, Field Faculty & Field Process

At the end of the placement, and after final grades have been submitted, students are encouraged to complete an online evaluation of the placement site, their Field Instructor, and the field placement process. The Field Office uses this feedback to inform future placements, ensure that appropriate supervision has been provided, and to improve the field placement processes.

Employment Offers or Changes

Should the student be approached about accepting employment at the agency during the field placement, the student should immediately contact the Field Education Director to discuss the potential implications to their placement. The student is expected to complete the entire placement as planned. Employment offers which disrupt, truncate, or otherwise affect the continuity and completion of the placement plan will not be approved.

If the student is in an employer-based placement, and is offered the opportunity to transfer into the placement position or a new job with the current or a new employer, then a different placement situation will need to be identified. In this circumstance, and before initiating any action or making any decisions which could have an impact on the current employer-based placement, the student and/or the Field Instructor shall consult with the Faculty Field Liaison.

Problem-Solving in Field

The SSW has adopted a phased approach to problem resolution, whereby, concerns should be addressed between the student and Field Instructor first, with continued escalation and faculty engagement when issues are not resolved. This phased process is also inclusive of issues that may be presented by the Field Instructor regarding the student. The SSW believes that the process of problem solving on one's own behalf can be an important part of the student's education and respects the right of the student to raise and pursue issues regarding their field work placement. See *Appendix A: Problem-Solving Phases*

Phase 1 involves the Field Instructor, Faculty Field Liaison, and/or the Field Director coaching the student to attempt to resolve the problem for themselves. While students may seek counsel from others, they

should be encouraged to address problems in collaboration with their Field Instructor as a first step. If this approach is unsuccessful, the issue escalates to Phase 2.

Phase 2 introduces consultation with the Faculty Field Liaison by the person raising the issue, seeking new ideas and solutions, and continued efforts to resolve the issue between the Field Instructor and the student with new insights and ideas. If this approach is unsuccessful, the issue escalates to Phase 3.

Phase 3 enlists the active involvement of the Faculty Field Liaison, with the student, Field Instructor and Faculty Field Liaison engaging in a joint meeting to discuss the issue and work toward resolution. At this point the Field Education Director is also notified of the issue. If this approach is unsuccessful, the issue escalates to Phase 4.

Phase 4 enlists the active involvement of the Field Education Director, with the student, Field Instructor, Faculty Field Liaison and Field Education Director engaging in a joint meeting to discuss the issue and work toward resolution. If this approach is unsuccessful, the issue escalates to Phase 5.

Phase 5 enlists the consultation of the BSW or MSW Program Director for input regarding the issue. At this time, and with input from the Program Director, the Field Education Director will determine whether the situation should be referred to the appropriate BSW or MSW Committee for Academic Review, the placement should be changed and student reassigned, etc. Final decisions for issues escalating to Phase 5 will be made by the Field Education Director. If the student wishes to appeal a decision made by the Field Education Director, or the Academic Review Committee, they are referred to the [WVU Student Conduct Code](#).

Addressing Performance and/or Problematic Behaviors

Field placements are made after a thoughtful placement process that includes active student and agency participation and choice. Field placements, once confirmed and committed to, are not changed without considerable cause. If the conclusion is reached by the Field Education Director, Faculty Field Liaison and Field Instructor that a placement should be discontinued, an assessment will be made jointly whether a student should be reassigned to another Field Instructor in the same agency or to another agency setting. Students who disrupt a placement without prior consultation and approval of the Faculty Field Liaison and the Field Office risk receiving a failing grade.

Problematic behaviors leading to an unsatisfactory rating or termination are not typically illegal or immoral, but are instead a recurrent series of minor problems indicating a lack of readiness for professional social work. Although placement terminations and unsatisfactory ratings occur infrequently, they present challenging situations for the student, the Field Instructor, Site Supervisor, and the Field Faculty Field Liaison.

Students entering their Field Experiences will be held accountable for their behavior and actions. Although not an exhaustive list, students should actively work to avoid the following examples of unacceptable and problematic behaviors.

- Disregard for agency policies, rules, and regulations.
- A hostile, resistant, or combative attitude toward learning, the Field Instructor, or others in the agency.
- Chronic tardiness and/or absenteeism.

- A personality unsuited to and incompatible with the practice of social work, such as being judgmental, unapproachable in appearance or attitude, and/or punitive or cold behavior.
- Emotional immaturity that interferes with the ability to effectively practice social work.
- Unprofessional behavior, including inappropriate communications and disrespect to agency staff and/or clients.
- Behavior that is emotionally damaging to clients.
- Emotional problems and needs that interfere with the student's ability to work with clients, colleagues, or supervisors.
- Boundary violations and concerns regarding the student's ability to maintain appropriate and professional contact with clients.

When student issues and unacceptable or problematic behaviors become evident, the Field Instructor and/or Site Supervisor should document the observed behaviors and arrange a meeting with the student to bring awareness to the issue and address the behavior. If the Field Instructor or Site Supervisor is unable to resolve the difficulties during the conference or sees no improvement following the conference, they should immediately contact the Faculty Field Liaison, who will fully engage the Phased Problem-Solving approach.

If the difficulties remain unresolved and lead to an early termination of the placement or to an unsatisfactory field performance rating, the Field Instructor is encouraged to develop the student's evaluation carefully and to consult with colleagues, the Faculty Field Liaison, and/or the Field Education Director. The evaluation should substantiate, through description and illustration, the basis for the unsatisfactory rating. It should give more than usual detail on all factors, including assignments, supervision, presenting problems, student's response to feedback, etc. It should be written firmly and yet, still with compassion and respect for the student.

Changing a Field Placement

The SSW makes every effort to keep students in their original placement locations when appropriate and safe to do so. In the event that a placement change is desired, and before initiating any action or making any decisions which could have an impact on the agreed upon placement plan, the student and/or the Field Instructor shall consult with the Faculty Field Liaison. In the event that the FFL is not available, the Field Education Coordinator or Field Education Director are to be consulted. Under no circumstance will a student be removed from an in-progress placement without a meeting of all appropriate parties involved. The only exception to this policy is if the Field Instructor deems that the student, agency staff, and/or clients would be harmed by continuation of the placement.

Termination from Field Placement

Termination from a field placement may occur when either the Faculty Field Liaison, Field Instructor, or Field Education director feels that there are concerns about a student's field performance or professionalism that have not responded to prior remediation efforts. Termination may also occur if a student's behaviors have resulted in a significant violation of the NASW Code of Ethics, agency policy, or state or federal laws. Termination from placement automatically results in an academic review with the BSW or MSW committee in order to make decisions about the student's continuance in the program. The academic review process for both BSW and MSW students is outlined in the [MSW program manual](#).

Appeal & Grievance Procedure

Students have the right to submit a formal grievance regarding courses, instructors, staff, or another aspect of the field education program at any time. Any issue or grievance involving a Field Instructor is handled as part of the phased problem-solving process. The steps for filing a formal grievance are as follows:

Level 1- If the grievance involves an individual faculty/staff member, if at all possible, the student should attempt to resolve this issue directly with the faculty/staff member involved.

Level 2- If the issue is not resolved, the student is unable to raise the issue directly with the faculty/staff member involved, or if the issue is related to another aspect of the program, the student should send a written notice detailing the grievance to the BSW or MSW program director. The BSW or MSW program director will contact the student, review the information, and determine what corrective action is necessary.

Level 3- If the problem persists, and the student is dissatisfied with the results of the current plan, they can file a written grievance with the Director of the SSW, who will review the information and determine a corrective action plan.

Level 4- If the problem persists after consulting with the Director of the SSW, or the student is dissatisfied with the corrective action plan, they can file a grievance with the Dean of the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences, who will determine the need for further action.

Inclement Weather

In case of inclement weather, students should monitor their MIX email, as notification via the MIX email system will occur if class is canceled. Students may also check the School website at <https://emergency.wvu.edu/>.

In the event of inclement or threatening weather, students should use their best judgment regarding travel to and from campus, and to their placement site. Safety should be the main concern. If a student cannot get to seminar class or their placement because of adverse weather conditions, they should contact their seminar instructor and/or Field Instructor as soon as possible.

Students should discuss with their Field Instructor the agency's notification process for agency closure due to inclement weather and may adjust their placement schedule in order to make up hours lost due to inclement weather, per Field Instructor approval. Similarly, if the seminar/capstone instructor is unable to reach the seminar/capstone location, the instructor will notify the class of cancellation or changes as soon as possible (at least two hours before class starts), using email notification, to prevent students from embarking on unnecessary travel. If a student cannot get to seminar/capstone because of weather conditions, the instructor will make allowances relative to the required attendance policy, as well any scheduled tests, quizzes, or other assessments.

Personal Safety

Students engaging in their field education experience should exercise both caution and good judgement in situations where there may be risks to their personal safety and/or harm to themselves or clients. Examples of such situations may include confronting an agitated, explosive, or violent client alone; intervening in an

escalating situation involving more than one client where interpersonal violence seems likely; and/or any situation where a client has a weapon. In any situation where a student feels threatened or is concerned for their personal safety they should, 1) immediately contact their supervisor or the supervisor on site for support and assistance, and 2) contact the police or emergency medical services for immediate assistance. Any situation where a student has experienced a threat to their personal safety should also be discussed in supervision and documented by the Field Office.

Malpractice Insurance Coverage

Professional liability insurance coverage is provided by West Virginia University for students enrolled in the School of Social Work, provided there is a written Memorandum of Affiliation (MOA) or Understanding (MOU), establishing an agreement between the placement agency and the University. Students must be enrolled in the correct section of the appropriate field course to be covered under this policy. It is important that students are acting within the scope of their role as a student learner within the field placement agency. This coverage is self-insured by the West Virginia Board of Risk and Insurance Management. The insurance program provides professional liability coverage on an occurrence basis with limits of One Million Dollars per occurrence. AIG insurance company is the third party administrator for the State's insurance program.

Addresses are as follows:

State Board of Risk & Insurance Management
4501 MacCorkle Avenue, SW
300 Ghannam Building
South Charleston, WV

AIG Insurance Companies
300 Capitol Street
Kanawha Valley Bldg-12th Floor
PO Box 11177
Charleston, WV 25330

Health & Medical Coverage

While student injuries in field placement are rare, there is an element of personal risk for those who engage in the practice of social work. It is important for students to know that if an injury should be sustained while in the field placement, his or her own medical insurance will be the only source of medical coverage. The University is not responsible for accidents occurring to students in connection with class, laboratory, shop, field work, travel, or other activities. Students may rely on their own coverage or purchase a student health policy. Information about this policy may be obtained from the University Health Service.

Immunizations

Many field placement agencies have specific requirements related to infectious disease immunizations, such as TB tests, Hepatitis immunity, etc. These requirements are reviewed prior to the student and Field Instructor finalizing the placement. Compliance with these requirements, as well as the documentation of immunizations, health status, etc., are to be discussed between the student and the field agency staff. Although the SSW may verify medical tests and/or immunizations provided by students, the West Virginia University School of Social Work does not require, nor maintain, records of student immunizations or health status as a condition of admission to the program.

HIPAA Training Requirement for Field Students

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) was enacted in part to protect the security and privacy of individually identifiable health information. Federal law requires every person who will be in contact with a patient's protected health information to have training in the HIPAA Privacy Standard.

Because students are covered by West Virginia University's malpractice insurance while they are in their field experience, the School of Social Work and WVU requires that students complete WVU's online HIPAA training annually and renew their certification every twelve months. Students must complete and maintain their HIPAA certification during their field experience and will find this to be a required activity as part of their Learning Contract for Foundation-Generalist and Specialized-Advanced field placements. The training is conducted with an on-line tutorial with quiz, which must be passed with a minimum of 80%, and may be taken as many times as necessary until they pass with the minimum percentage. Students may also be required to take the HIPAA training at their field placement sites.

Criminal Background Checks

Field placement agencies may require potential students to submit to a criminal background check prior to acceptance for placement. Compliance with this requirement, as well as any related fees, are to be negotiated between the student and the field agency staff. Students are made aware by the Field Education Director, **that the existence of a criminal background has the potential to negatively impact placement, licensure and future employment within the social work profession.** At this time, the West Virginia University School of Social Work does not require, nor maintain, records of criminal background checks as a condition of admission to the program.

Transportation

Students shall not be expected to transport clients in their personal automobile as a requirement of their field placement, unless the agency can provide insurance coverage to them for this activity. University insurance does not include any coverage for the student should an accident occur while transporting a client in a personal automobile.

Sexual Harassment

Per the [Board of Governor's Governance Rule 1.6](#), West Virginia University (WVU) does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence. It is important that students know that there are resources available if you or someone you know needs assistance. Students may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff, but keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator.

If a student wants to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from the [Carruth Center](#), 304-293-4431 (24-hour hotline), and locally within the community at the Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center (RDVIC), 304-292-4431 (24-hour hotline).

Appendix A: Problem-Solving Phases

Problem-Solving Phases In Field Education

We know challenges can arise during field placement experiences and members of the field triad (Student, Field Instructor, Faculty Field Liaison) may need guidance to help develop a winning solution. The following flowchart outlines the steps Students, Field Instructors, and Faculty Field Liaisons should follow when working through a difficult issue. Whether the issue is brought forward by the Student or Field Instructor, all problem solving will start in Phase #1. While we know that some may require more dialogue and input, we always aim to resolve issues early and not reach the later phases of this process. If and when an issue cannot be resolved by working through the process, Phase #5 may involve an Academic Review, placement changes, and/or other serious actions regarding the student's placement.

