

BSW Field Education Frequently Asked Questions 2022-2023

1. Q. What is the purpose of the field instruction experience?

A. The field instruction experience is an integral part of the total curriculum and is designed 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 studied in class into work with clients and client systems, at micro, mezzo and macro levels.

2. Q. When does Field begin and how many hours will I be in placement?

A. The BSW Field Experience requires completion of 400 placement hours and utilizes a “block placement” model that occurs during the student’s final semester of the undergraduate program. During the Spring semester of their senior year, students are in field placement 4 days a week, for approximately 28-30 hours per week throughout the semester, while attending a concurrent 3-hour Capstone Seminar spring semester. All students will receive detailed information regarding field placement requirements during Field Education Briefings scheduled during their junior year.

3. Q. How will I know which placement options are available?

A. As you begin preparing for field, you will register as a student user in Tevera, the School of Social Work’s online field management system. Using Tevera, you will be able to explore the field agencies with which WVU has an established agreement for field. If you have an agency in mind that is not in our database, you may also suggest a new site and the Field Office will explore the possibility on your behalf. You will continue to use Tevera once you are in field for time recording and field documentation.

4. Q. How do I get matched to my field placement?

A. The Field Office works closely with students to determine a placement that matches their career and educational goals. Beginning in the spring of their junior year, students will complete a field application to indicate their interests, goals, and any specific circumstances for consideration. Students then have an individual meeting with the field office to further discuss these details. Students are then matched to appropriate sites for their BSW placements and expected to interview on their own with the assigned site. Placement matches are based on factors such as student choice, ability, access to transportation, and availability of sites. Some sites may require students to leave Morgantown for more varied learning opportunities in surrounding communities. Students can expect to have their field placement finalized by the start of the spring semester in January, though some will have it finalized sometime earlier in the fall or summer. It is not unusual to not have a field placement finalized by November – if this is your situation, do not panic! You still have plenty of time, and the field office WILL ensure that you have a field placement in time for the spring semester in January.

5. Q. If I am currently employed at a social service agency, may I do my field placement at my place of employment?

A. Maybe. Requests for Employer-Based Placements are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and must meet specific criteria in order to assure that the placement site will satisfy both CSWE and SSW field requirements. Students submit a proposal and identify the specific activities that contribute to competency development and must be supervised by an approved BSW Field Instructor. Employer-Based Placement applications are submitted as part of the field application process. Students approved for employer-based placements will move through placement at the same pace as other students; they may not log more hours in a week than would be typically completed in a non employer-based setting.

6. Q. I work 5-6 days a week during daytime hours. Can I do my placement on weekends or in the evenings?

A. Probably not. The field experience is designed to provide students with exposure to the multiple services, activities, social work roles, operations, and populations within an agency, program or organization. Students are expected to be in field about 4 days a week during the placement period and often the client activities and opportunity for competency building occurs during regular business hours. Thus, the majority of these occur during the standard Monday-Friday work day, and the majority of placement hours should occur during that time period. Students must have access to qualified supervision and have regular interaction with their Field Instructor and/or Site Supervisor. Although many social service agencies offer 24 hour/7 day services, there may not be appropriate supervision available for the student. Occasional placement activities conducted during the site's "off" hours may be permitted but must be approved by the Field Instructor and Faculty Field Liaison.

7. Q. I have a lot of work experience in social work settings, may I waive the field instruction requirement?

A. No. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), which is responsible for accreditation of social work education programs, does not allow work or life experience to be substituted for the field instruction component.

8. Q. Are there any other costs related to field placement, other than tuition?

A. Yes. All students registering for field (SOWK 491) will be assessed a field fee of \$160 for the semester. This fee includes a lifetime license to Tevera for students and supports the SSW's Field Office activities, such as cultivating new placement sites and supervisor trainings. Many sites require that the student also undergo a criminal background check, drug screen, or infectious disease testing such as a TB test, and sometimes these costs are the student's responsibility. The Field Office works with students to identify low cost or free services for some of these requirements.

9. Q. Are there opportunities for paid placements?

A. Generally not. Field placements are courses that afford students the opportunity to engage with clients and communities as a component of their educational program and without a social work license, similarly to educational, medical, or other health professional accredited programs. These educational experiences are structured as learning and not labor and comply with the U.S. Department of Labor regulations and are not required to offer stipends or compensation for students (CSWE).

Specialized programs such as Title IVE provide stipends to accepted students. Occasionally there are scholarships associated with field placements sometimes agencies are able to offer stipends for field placements. However, most field placements are unpaid.

10. Q. May I do extra hours to finish my placement earlier in the semester?

A. Students are typically permitted to finish placement up to two weeks before the end of the semester if they have met all requirements and have approval from their field supervisors. The field placement experience is intended to provide exposure to the ongoing, multi-faceted aspects and activities within the day to day operations of a social work practice setting. Students are required to maintain a consistent presence throughout the placement period to maximize the depth and breadth of the learning experiences. However, should a student's field schedule be disrupted due to an unforeseen situation (illness, death, etc.), they may make up missed hours during academic holidays and breaks, per approval from their Field Instructor.

11. Q. I'm from out of state and/or plan to relocate out of state, but still commute for my classes. May I do my field placement at an out-of-state site?

A. Out of state placements, except those already-approved sites in MD, OH and PA, and close to the WV border, are only considered in cases where there is a compelling reason. Typically, sites are within 2 hours driving distance of Morgantown. Students needing an out-of-state placement must discuss with the field office how this particular placement will meet their learning goals and satisfy BSW program requirements. Out-of-state placement sites that are not currently on the approved field site list are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Field Office and must meet the same criteria as any field site. Even if the request is approved, students are expected to attend their required Monday SOWK 481 Senior Seminar Capstone course and all other relevant classes in-person on the Morgantown campus during field placement. No virtual options will be offered for the SOWK 481 Senior Seminar Capstone course and students should be aware of the travel burden associated with coming to class one day a week from a long distance.

12. Q. What happens if I have a criminal record?

A. Students who have a criminal record or a record of CPS/APS complaints may face challenges finding a field placement. Students in these circumstances are encouraged to inform the field office early on to determine the best path forward. See the [Statement Regarding Criminal Background and/or CPS/APS History](#) for further details.

13. Q. What is SOWK 481 Senior Seminar and Capstone?

A. It is a 3-credit-hour course that all students in their field placements must take during the spring of their senior year. It is offered on Mondays 4:00 – 6:50 with occasional required activities at 3:00 pm. During this class, students will have the opportunity to process their field placement experiences, further their professional development, and complete the capstone requirement of their liberal arts degree at WVU. The capstone project will be a paper that is written with feedback and input from the instructor over the course of the entire semester. The student utilizes experiences in their field placement to write this paper. It is an exciting way to finish off the BSW degree and prepare students to enter the workforce or go on to a graduate program.

For more detailed answers please see the 2022-2023 [Field Education Handbook](#).