MSW Field Education
Frequently Asked Questions

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. Regular standing students complete both a Foundation-Generalist (300 contact hours) and a Specialized-Advanced (600 contact hours) field placement. Advanced standing students will only complete a Specialized-Advanced (600 contact hours) field placement. Depending on the placement type, students must maintain an average of 16-20 hours per week at the field placement site and attend professional seminars. The total number of on-site placement hours are completed within 15 weeks for Generalist and 20 weeks for Advanced.

3. Q. What are the eligibility requirements for placement?
   A. Students may begin Generalist Field Placement only if they are enrolled in the co-requisite (Full-Time) or have completed all prerequisite (Part-time) courses with a grade of “B” or higher, and have no outstanding grades of “I” or “NR” in those courses. Required co-requisite/prerequisite coursework for the MSW Generalist Field Placement (SOWK581) is SOWK 513, 531, 520 & 540, Advanced Field Placement (SOWK682), is either Advanced Standing, or all of the afore-mentioned 500-level courses plus SOWK 621, 633, 643 (DP), 651 (COSA), 649 (DP), 654 (COSA). In addition, students will take one required course concurrently with each semester of the Advanced field placement.

4. Q. May previous work or volunteer experience in social work, or an internship from another program such as Counseling or Psychology be used in place of the MSW Field Experience?
   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. The only circumstance approved for waiver of the MSW Foundation Field Experience is when the student meets the requirements for Advanced Standing, due to having a BSW.

5. Q. I have a Masters Degree in Counseling, Psychology or another human services field, may I use the internship/practicum hours for that program to waive the social work field instruction requirement?
   A. No. Social Work Field instruction experience is based upon very specific Competencies and Practice Behaviors which correlate with the many varied social work roles, interventions and practice settings in compliance with CSWE accreditation standards. Therefore, internships/practicum from other non-social work degree programs may not be substituted for the field instruction component.

6. Q. Can I do my generalist and advance placement at the same agency?
   A. The field office will look at each circumstance to determine if it is possible.
7. Q. If I am currently employed at a social service agency, may I do my field placement(s) 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 the CSWE and Division field instruction curriculum requirements. Two specific criteria are that the placement activities must be different from the current employment duties and responsibilities, regardless of the length of time the person has been in the job, and the current work supervisor may not serve as the placement task supervisor or field instructor. Employer-Based Placement Applications are submitted as part of the Student Field Placement & Interest Application.

8. 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. The majority of these occur during the standard work day, from Monday-Friday. Students are expected to be in field placement for 2-3 weekdays during the placement period. Hence, the majority of placement hours must occur during that time period. A second criterion is that a qualified, MSW Field Instructor be available for ongoing student supervision. Although many social service agencies offer 24 hour/7 day services, there may not be appropriate supervision available for the student. Occasional placement activities experienced or conducted during the agency, program or organizations “off” hours may be permitted, but must be approved by the field instructor. This type of placement proposal must be submitted and approved by the Field Director well before the placement application deadline.

9. Q. May I do extra hours to finish my placement earlier in the semester?
A. No. 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 weekly schedule across a minimum number of weeks 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.

10. 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 placement sites which are not currently on the approved field site list, are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Field Director, and must meet the same criteria as any field site. If the site is approved, the student in an ‘out-of-area” placement must make arrangements to attend the required classes and field seminars.

11. Q. Are there any other costs related to field placement, other than tuition?
A. You may be required to travel to the site. Sites may not have sufficient free parking for students, so parking fees may be incurred. Many sites now require that the student 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.

12. Q. What happens if I have a criminal record?
A. If you have a criminal record, it has the potential to negatively impact your ability to secure a field placement, a social work license, and/or employment in the social work field. If you have such a background, it is imperative that you inform the MSW Program Director immediately, so that you can make an informed decision as to whether or not to enter field or continue the program.