

## MSW Field Education

### Frequently Asked Questions 2021-2022\*

**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 hours) and a Specialized-Advanced\* (600 hours) field placement. Advanced standing students will only complete a Specialized-Advanced field placement. Depending on the placement type, full-time students will maintain an average of 16-24 hours per week at the field placement site and attend professional seminars, while part-time students will maintain 12-20 hours per week plus professional seminars. The total number of on-site placement hours are completed in approximately 21 weeks for full-time Generalist and 37 weeks for full-time 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 530, 513, 531, 520, 541 & 540, Advanced Field Placement (SOWK682), is either Advanced Standing, or all of the afore-mentioned 500-level courses plus SOWK 633, 643, 650, 649, 654. In addition, students will take one required course concurrently with each semester of the Advanced field placement.

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

A. As you begin the field process, 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 can 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.

**5. 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.

**6. Q. I have a Master of Counseling Degree, 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.

**7. Q. Can I do my Generalist and Advance placements at the same agency?**

A. Maybe. The field office looks at each circumstance to determine if it is possible.

**8. 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 CSWE and SSW field requirements. Students submit a two-part proposal and identify the specific activities that contribute to competency development, and must be supervised by an approved Field Instructor. Employer-Based Placement applications are submitted as part of the field application process.

**9. Q. I work 5-6 days a week during daytime hours, can I do some of my placement on weekends or in the evenings?**

A. Maybe. 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 placement for 2-3 weekdays during the placement period and the majority of these activities occur during the standard work day, Monday-Friday. Thus, the majority of placement hours should occur during that time period. A second consideration is that 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 experienced or conducted during the agency, program or organizations "off" hours may be permitted, but must be approved by the Field Instructor.

**10. 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. Students may complete their field requirements no more than two weeks before finals.

**11. Q. I'm from out of state and considering a placement outside of West Virginia. How do out-of-state placements work?**

A. Out-of-state placements and agencies are treated the same as in-state options. All agencies must complete an application to be an approved field site and must have an active agreement with WVU for student placements.

**12. Q. Is there a field fee or any other costs related to field placement, other than tuition?**

A. Yes. All students registering for field courses (SOWK581 and SOWK682) will be assessed a field fee of \$160 per 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 now 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. Some sites may not provide free parking for students, so parking fees may be incurred.

**13. 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.

*\*Due to COVID-19 disruptions, field hours have been reduced to 85% of typical program requirements for the 2021-22 academic year, per CSWE guidelines. Listed hourly requirements are SSW standard program requirements.*