

## MSW Field Education Frequently Asked Questions 2024-2025

### 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.

- Fulltime students begin their foundation placements in early October of their first year and complete 300 hours by the end of April (approximately 12-16 hours per week). Part-time students begin their foundation placements in June between their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year and complete 300 hours by early December (approximately 12-16 hours per week).
- All students begin advanced placements in August of their final year. Fulltime students complete 600 hours between mid-August and late April (approximately 16-20 hours per week). Part-time students complete 600 hours between mid-August and late June (approximately 15-18 hours per week).

### 3. 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 some of the field agencies with which WVU has a relationship with. Students in the local area will have a wide range of preapproved options, students outside the local area will be able to check for preapproved agencies, and will also work with the field office to find appropriate placement options in their local communities. If there are not already sites listed in your local area, you may find the [211 website](#), NASW local chapter websites, or your own professional network to be good places to start exploring. If you have an agency in mind that is not in our database, you can share the agency name and contact information with your field coordinator who will work with you to determine if the agency can be approved as a field site.

### 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. Students in the Morgantown region will be matched to appropriate sites for their foundation year placements. These matches are based on factors such as student choice, ability, and availability of sites. Local students will interview for advanced placements with more autonomy, but still receive support and guidance from the Field Office. Students outside the Morgantown region will work closely with the Field Office to find appropriate placements in their local communities.

### Q. I do not live in West Virginia, how does field placement work for me?

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. The Field Office works with students to support them in finding appropriate placements in their local communities.

### 5. Q. Can I do my Generalist and Advance placements at the same agency?

A. Maybe. The field office will explore students' specific goals and circumstances. When considering multiple placements at the same agency, consideration would be given to appropriate level of learning opportunities at the placement, variety of programs offered, and how this lines up with students' goals.

**6. 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 proposal and identify the specific activities that contribute to competency development, and must be supervised by an approved MSW 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.

**7. 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 often the client activities and opportunity for competency building occurs during regular business hours. 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.

**8. 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 final 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 (at least 8 hours a week) 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.

**9. Q. Are there opportunities for paid placements?**

**A.** Sometimes. 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).

Some agencies are able to offer stipends for field placements. There are also specialized programs such as [Title IVE](#) and the [Rural Integrated Behavioral Health Training Program \(RIBHT\)](#) that provide stipends to accepted students. The Field Office attempts to promote paid placement opportunities and will help students seek them out when possible. However, most field placements are unpaid.

**10. 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.

**11. 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.

**12. 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 "C" 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 & 540. Required co-requisite/prerequisite coursework for the Advanced Field Placement (SOWK682), is either Advanced Standing, or completion of 581. Students must also be enrolled in SOWK 616 during the spring semester of their Advanced field experience.

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. 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 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.

**14. Q. Are there any state specific restrictions or considerations for field placements?**

**A.** Due to Colorado workman's compensation regulations, WVU SSW students in Colorado are required to seek paid or employment based internships. WVU SSW cannot guarantee paid or employment-based internships will be accessible to students, which may impact completion of our program.

*For more detailed answers please see the 2024-2025 [Field Education Handbook](#).*