

BSW 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. The BSW Field Experience requires completion of 450 on-site 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 32 hours per week for 15-weeks, and also attend a concurrent 3-hour Capstone Seminar during that time. All students will receive detailed information regarding field placement requirements during Field Education Orientations scheduled during the academic year.

Students that are able to take approved courses the summer before their senior year may also be eligible to “Fast-Track” their graduation by a full semester. This allows students to complete their BSW Field Experience in Fall of their senior year and potentially graduate in December. Students interested in the BSW Fast-Track Model should talk with their advisor to ensure their degree plan and financial resources are in line with an early graduation and includes summer tuition options.

3. Q. I am currently employed at a social service agency; may I do my field placement(s) at my place of employment?

A. In an effort to assure that the BSW level student experiences a unique Foundation-Generalist Field Experience, one which demonstrates and offers extensive new learning experiences and activities indicative of the depth and breadth of social work practices, employer-based placements are not typically allowed for BSW students.

4. 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.

5. 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 Monday-Friday work day, and the majority of placement hours should occur during that time period. A second criterion is that a qualified BSW Field Instructor be available for on-going 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 and discussed with the Faculty Field Liaison.

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

A. Possibly. 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. You will also be required to travel to the site and may incur travel and/or parking costs. The Field Office works with students to identify low cost or free services for some of these requirements.

7. 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 throughout the semester 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, military duty, etc.), they may make up missed hours during academic holidays and breaks, per approval from their Field Instructor.

8. 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 submit an email request to the Field Director, which should also include a detailed proposal regarding 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 Director and must meet the same criteria as any field site. Even if the request is approved, students are expected to attend their required Monday capstone and all other relevant classes on the Morgantown campus during field placement.

9. 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 BSW Program Director immediately, so that you can make an informed decision as to whether or not to enter field or continue the program.