

THE CATHOLIC  
UNIVERSITY  
OF AMERICA



National Catholic School  
of Social Service

# Field Education Manual

## 2025 – 2026 Academic Year



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## A Message from the Director of Field Education

Welcome to Field Education at the National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS)! I am excited to work alongside each of you, whether you are a Student, Agency Partner, Field Instructor, Field Faculty, or NCSSS Colleague, as we embark on the 2025 - 2026 Academic Year. This upcoming year holds countless opportunities for growth, learning, and partnership. As you prepare for placements to begin, I encourage you to take the time to read through this manual thoroughly, as it is designed to guide you through each step of the program.

Field Education is referred to as the “signature pedagogy of social work education”, and for good reason! Whether starting a Generalist Practice placement or advancing on to a Specialized Practice setting, Field Education is where learning comes to life, and where class theory is bridged with agency practice. It is in their placement sites where students will deepen their Social Work skills and gain the confidence to serve in a variety of settings after successful completion of the program. At NCSSS, we are committed to supporting our students in developing their professional identity as they make an impact in their communities.

This manual contains everything you need to understand and navigate Field Education at NCSSS, including program details, standards, and key requirements. You are also encouraged to visit website at <https://ncsss.catholic.edu/academics/field-education/index.html> for more information, and refer to this manual when questions arise.

Throughout the academic year, please know that the Office of Field Education is here to support you through the highs and challenges that come with emerging practice and the demands of field instruction. We are dedicated to working closely with all field stakeholders to ensure a collaborative and enriching experience.

Thank you for your commitment to Field Education. Field Education is more than fulfilling an hours requirement or completing evaluations; it is the process of transforming from a Student to a Social Worker. I look forward to seeing each of our students grow and succeed in their field placement sites across the Washington D.C. area, as well the country, and world. I wish you all a great year ahead!

Warmly,

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## **Program Overview**

### **Mission Statements**

#### The Catholic University of America (CUA), Mission Statement

As the National University of the Catholic Church in the United States, founded and sponsored by the bishops of the country with the approval of the Holy See, The Catholic University of America is committed to being a comprehensive Catholic and American institution of higher learning, faithful to the teachings of Jesus Christ as handed on by the Church.

Dedicated to advancing the dialogue between faith and reason, The Catholic University of America seeks to discover and impart the truth through excellence in teaching and research, all in service to the Church, the nation and the world.

*(Approved by the Board of Trustees, December 12, 2006)*

#### The National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS), Mission Statement

Derived from the mission of The Catholic University of America and that of the social work profession, the mission of the National Catholic School of Social Service is to educate students from diverse faiths and cultures who in their professional endeavors will embody the values of social justice, service, and scholarship. This mission is grounded in the justice and charity foundation of Catholic social teachings and the tradition of a modern university that welcomes all forms of human inquiry.

In support of its mission, NCSSS has established the following goals:

- a. To advance knowledge, values, and competencies through the development, application, and dissemination of theory and research relevant to the social work profession.
- b. To serve and empower vulnerable, oppressed, and impoverished people and communities.
- c. To promote social and economic justice and individual and societal well-being in the context of The Catholic University of America, the social work profession, and the needs of the local, national, and global communities.

## **Administration and Staff**

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## **Field Education Program Goals**

Field placements are a key part of our students' social work education, providing invaluable support for what our students are learning in the classroom. Direct engagement in service activities in a wide range of agencies and organizations gives students the opportunity to personally experience how social workers can make a real difference in people's lives. Field placements support students in building their social work identity outside of the classroom learning environment.

*At the National Catholic School of Social Service, we are committed to helping our students:*

- a. learn to provide social services across fields of practice
- b. acquire the knowledge, values and skills for intervention with individuals, groups, families, communities and other systems
- c. develop a professional identity consistent with social work values
- d. develop the skills necessary to evaluate their social work practice
- e. gain experience with various client populations including diverse racial and ethnic groups, and at-risk populations

- f. develop a professional commitment to social work practice
- g. evolve a practice style consistent with the student's personal strengths
- h. develop the ability to work within a social welfare agency or organization.

### **Competency-Based Education**

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) utilizes a competency-based education framework as the foundation for social work curricula. The 2022 EPAS advances a developmental and holistic approach to learning, emphasizing the integration of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes across multiple learning contexts. Competency-based education focuses on demonstrated outcomes, where students apply their learning to real-world practice in a measurable and observable way.

Each competency describes the dimensions of social work practice that all students are expected to demonstrate upon completion of their programs. These include integrated practice behaviors that promote readiness for professional practice at both the generalist and specialized levels.

In the first year of the MSW program and the senior year of the BSW program, students are prepared for generalist practice. This placement focuses on provide students with experience with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, based on scientific inquiry and best practices.

The second year of the MSW program (and for those in the Advanced Standing program) focuses on specialized practice education. The curriculum offers two specializations:

- Clinical Social Work Practice
- Community, Administration, and Policy Practice (CAPP)

*Under the 2022 EPAS, the nine social work competencies are as follows:*

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
2. Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice
3. Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice
4. Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice
5. Engage in Policy Practice
6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

These competencies apply across both generalist and specialized field education, ensuring continuity and progression in students' professional development. Field placement opportunities are designed to provide students with learning experiences that allow them to demonstrate competence through observable behaviors within their designated practice settings. When students begin a new placement, they will work on a Learning Plan with their Field Instructor to identify the learning opportunities available to them, in alignment with the nine social work competencies.

## **Placements Overview**

Field Education is an integral component to the NCSSS Social Work Curriculum across all program options. The intent is to connect the theoretical and conceptual content that students learn in the classroom and apply it to their practice settings. Both classroom and field learning contribute equally to students' demonstration and mastery of the Program's articulated Social Work competencies. At both levels, students are enrolled in an integrative seminar and practice courses that facilitate the connection between classroom and agency practice. Student learning is fostered through the integration of outcomes in the classroom and in the field, with the identification of the knowledge, values, and skills necessary to reach these outcomes. Classes provide the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the field practicum offers opportunities for application. This dynamic learning process ensures that students continually advance their knowledge and skills.

### **Generalist Year Placement:**

- required for Undergraduate Seniors in the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program, and First Year Students of the Master of Social Work (MSW) Program.
- This placement is a minimum of 14 hours per week, totaling 420 hours across two semesters, traditionally from September - April.
- This placement provides students with an overview of the social work profession and the generalist model of practice.
- Students gain experience working with multiple client systems, including individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations, while learning and utilizing social work processes.
- Working with diverse populations, students are expected to work toward addressing problems of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression affecting the wellbeing of their clients.
- Students learn to practice professional social work in a manner consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics, including identifying and analyzing the difference between professional and personal values, and how this impacts practice effectiveness.



### Specialized Practice Placement:

- required for Advanced Standing Students and Second Year Students of the MSW Program.
- This placement is a minimum of 16 hours per week, totaling 480 hours across two semesters, traditionally from September – April.
- The specialized field experience builds on the generalist skills gained in the Generalist Placement.
- Students are placed in field agencies that provide them with supervised practice experience consistent with their chosen specialization:
  - Clinical Specialization: students focus their learning on direct practice with individuals, groups, families, and take advanced theory and practice courses with diverse populations. Students are placed in field agencies where they can develop skills in assessment, intervention, treatment planning, termination, and evaluation.
  - Community Administration and Policy Practice (CAPP) Specialization: students focus their learning on community organization, social policy, planning, administration and management to gain an understanding social work at the macro level. Students are placed in field agencies that focus on management, social planning, policy analysis, research and advocacy to guide interventions for social change at a system level.

### **Field Education Format**

Students complete one placement for their generalist year and one placement for their area of specialized practice. Each field placement site must be separate and distinct in the clients served and the tasks required. Exceptions to this can be made after review by the Field Director. The educational experiences available at the agency and the educational needs of the student are factors that help determine the student's placement.

***Field Education is a Course.*** In order to register for and begin in field, students are required to meet with their Academic Advisor to discuss course registration and plan for academic study. Students that plan on being in a field placement must register for the concurring field seminar. In order to advance to the next field placement or to satisfactorily meet the NCSSS program requirements for graduation, students are required to receive a Pass in Field Seminar.

*The Field Seminar Courses are as follows:*

- BSW Undergraduates: SSS 465 and SSS 466 -- Undergraduate Concurrent Field Instruction I & II
- Generalist Practice Students: SSS 673 and SSS 674 -- Generalist Practice Field Instruction I & II
- Specialized Practice Students: SSS 871 and SSS 872 --Advanced Field Instruction and Seminar I & II

### **Advancing Standing Students in Field**

Advanced Standing students have been accepted into NCSSS after completing a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree. They enter the program as MSW Second Year students and follow the same academic format as traditional MSW Second Year students. Advanced Standing students are required to meet with the Office of Field Education during the application process to review the hour requirement at their prior university (if not a graduate of NCSSS). An individualized plan will be developed for each Advanced Standing student in order to verify that they will meet the NCSSS Field Program Hours Requirement.

## **Field Education Policies and Procedures**

### **General Field Placement Requirements**

There are basic requirements the Office of Field Education uses when considering a new field placement site. While each placement is considered individually, the basic requirements are:

- There is an available Field Instructor who will work with the student throughout their time in a placement. The Field Instructor is an integral member of agency staff and offers regularly scheduled weekly individual supervision lasting a minimum of 1 hour. It is expected that the field instructor will be available to the student at other times outside of set supervisory time.
- The agency agrees to provide a range of experiences that relate to generalist and/or specialized practice. Agencies participate with NCSSS in educating students for professional practice in a variety of settings.
- The agency provides the student with an understanding of policies, organizational structure, functions, and managerial systems of the agency, and legal and confidentiality mandates that apply to the agency's service parameters.
- The agency has an explicit safety protocol that addresses the agency's response to emergency situations, physical safety in the agency, physical safety in the field and emotional safety as they apply to the student's work within the agency. Direct communication and discussion of these agency-based safety protocols between the field instructor/agency representative and the student(s) placed at the agency is required.
- The agency provides learning opportunities through in-person contact. There is no approved placement that works solely with clients virtually or through simulation.

### **New Agency Application & Visit**

All prospective field placement sites begin the process of affiliating with NCSSS by completing the New Agency Form. Once the information is received by the Field Office, Field staff schedules a site visit or screening call to hear more about the agency's function and mission, internship requirements, and field instructor credentials. All prospective field placement organizations are required to meet with the Office of Field Education prior to beginning the affiliation process. The Field Office requests all agencies that New Agency Forms be submitted any time there is a new Field Instructor, or change in structure or services of an agency or program.

Prior to moving through the agency affiliation process, the Office of Field Education meets with prospective agencies to discuss expectations and responsibilities of field education. This

includes the field placement structure, competency-based practice, as well as role and requirements of a field placement supervisor. During this meeting the Office of Field Education inquires about learning opportunities and requires interested agencies to provide examples of the level of services that can be provided at an agency.

### **Agency Affiliation Agreement**

All required policies of new agencies are identified within the affiliation agreement of the Catholic University of America and the identified Field Site. The requirements include an agency's ability to provide educational experiences and assignments, identified insurance requirements, and meet all other conditions in the affiliation agreement. All field placements must have a signed affiliation agreement before students can begin a placement.

The university requires that a Statement of Agreement between The Catholic University of America and the Agency be signed by both parties and maintained on file in the Office of Field Education. This statement formally recognizes mutual expectations and responsibilities of all parties involved in field education. Any proposed amendments to the agreement must be reviewed and approved by the University General Counsel prior to obtaining signatures. The agreement renews automatically, unless the Agency requires annual renewal, or either party chooses to terminate the agreement. Students may not begin field placement until an active Affiliation Agreement has been developed.

### **Student Placement Process**

Decisions regarding individual placements are made within a broad context. The learning needs of each student, placement opportunities, and the nature of the supervision available must be considered. Knowledge about each individual student's needs is matched with knowledge of the agency and the field instructor

The field education policies for the placement process for all students include:

- Students must communicate directly with the field staff member from the Office of Field Education regarding placement interests and options
- Students may not contact an agency or field instructor without prior approval from the Field Office
- Students must attend a placement interview with the potential placement site that they have been referred to after receiving a referral from the Field Office
- Students must submit the Confirmation of Practicum Form once they have been offered an accepted a field placement opportunity
- Students must adhere to agency specific requirements for placement which can include a criminal background check, fingerprinting, medical clearances, etc.

- Placements for the second year cannot be in a similar setting, program, or practice modality as their first-year experience and cannot be with the same field instructor
- Students can only intern at a placement agency for one academic year. Exceptions to this may only be made by the Field Director.

Students are provided a list of agencies that the University is affiliated with during the placement process. Students who are interested in a placement not indicated, are encouraged to reach out to the Field Office for review and approval. Online students participate in the placement process by providing the Field Office with a list of agencies or any known contacts in their geographic area where they may be interested in completing field placement at. The Field Office works with the student to facilitate requests for specific field placements within their local community.

Students in the BSW Program are admitted to field education only if they have met the specified criteria.

- Admission to the BSW program
- Completion of prior course requirements in the BSW program
- Preparation of an application to field
- Submission of a resume
- Review of application materials and determination of eligibility for field
- Completion of the placement process (referral, interview, acceptance)
- Enrollment in field seminar and practice classes concurrently
- Enrollment in a practice class while completing field education
- Completion of the field placement process.

Students in the MSW Program are admitted to field education only if they have met the specified criteria for field education. These criteria include:

- Admission to the MSW program,
- Completion of prior course requirements in the MSW program, for part-time students,
- Submission of an application to field that includes an updated resume and statement of interest
- Review of application materials and determination of eligibility for field,
- Completion of the placement process (referral, interview, acceptance),
- Concurrent enrollment in field seminar and practice classes,
- Concurrent enrollment in a practice class while completing field education,
- Successful completion of the field placement process, and
- Successful completion on the foundation year field practicum, for advanced year students.
- Admission to field education is available to students admitted to the MSW program. Full-time students are admitted to field upon entry into the program, while part-time

students are admitted to field education at the point in the program when field is sequenced.

*In order to receive a placement referral, students are required to complete the following steps:*

1. Meet with their Academic Advisor to identify their course of study and academic plan.
2. Register for concurring Field Seminar (SSS 673/674, SSS 871/872).
3. Complete Field Application materials which will be distributed to students via the Director of Field Education.
4. Return Field Application materials to Director of Field Education by the identified due date.
5. Once applications are received, the Field Office will reach out to the student to coordinate a placement meeting to discuss placement opportunities.

### **Flex-Hours and Non-Traditional Scheduling**

Students may need to maintain employment while completing the Field Education requirements of the degree program. There are limited agency partners that offer field hours strictly in the evening or weekends. **Students requesting field placements outside of standard agency operating hours (8am – 6pm, Monday – Friday) are required to bring an identified agency to the Field Office for review and final approval.** The Field Office cannot guarantee placements outside of standard operating hours. Students requesting a placement with flexible hours are required to begin the field placement process early to avoid delays in securing a placement.

### **The Field Application**

The Field Application includes a completed Field Application that outlines the students' demographics and program information, an Updated Resume, and an Updated Statement of Interest. In their field applications, students agree to release their field application materials to prospective field sites. Students indicate their preference of an agency/placement; however, the Office of Field Education cannot guarantee that students will be placed in one of their preferred field sites. Student requests will be used to help determine appropriate alternatives if their selections are unavailable. The application forms must be filled out in their entirety and submitted by the deadline identified by the Field Office. Materials received past the deadline may result in a delay in the start of field for that term. Some field sites require additional application procedures and/or letters of reference as part of the routine of applying for field placement. Students are made aware of this responsibility if it is part of the application requirements of the agency they are being referred to.

## **Placement Referral and Interview Process**

After submitting a field placement application, students will meet with the Office of Field Education to discuss placement options. After the placement meeting, the Field Office will initiate a referral to the identified agency. Every effort is made to assign students to field sites according to their expressed preferences. Referrals are submitted by the Field Office and should not be initiated by the student. The field site interviews only those students they feel best match their needs and ability to offer the type/kinds of student training that the student requires, and after review of the student's application materials, will notify the Field Office if they would like to move forward with an interview. The agency will notify the Field Office if they will be reaching out to the student directly, or if the student is requested to reach out to the agency. The student will then interview with the agency for a placement opportunity.

The interview is an opportunity for the student to learn about the field placement and for a field site to learn about the student. This interview allows the student to share their interests and previous experiences and discuss the skills they would like to acquire. The interview determines if the field placement will be able to meet the student's learning goals. Both students and field instructors are informed of the importance of the student/supervisor relationship in determining a successful field placement. The interview process allows the students to practice their job interviewing skills, meet and be evaluated by the potential field instructor, learn about the style of supervision and the field placement expectations, and become familiar with the functions of the field site. It also gives the field instructor the opportunity to determine if the student meets the needs and standards of the field site.

During the interview, field site personnel assess the student's level of interest, suitability for the general type of assignments they have in mind, and field schedules. If the field site has reservations about the suitability of the match between the field site and the student, the student and/or the field site contacts the Office of Field Education so alternate placement planning can begin. All students must successfully interview and be selected for placement by the field site. If students are not accepted for their first choice, the Field Office will work with them to secure an appropriate placement.

## **Placement Offer/Acceptance**

Once an agency extends an offer for placement, the student is required to accept the offer. Once the student accepts, the student is required to submit the Confirmation of Practicum Form to the Field Office. This form is available on the NCSSS Field Website. After submitting this form, students are required to move through the required agency onboarding process,

which can include background checks, fingerprinting, physical exams, other medical requirements, etc. The Office of Field Education does not determine what onboarding or clearance materials are required of an agency, and each placement site has different requirements. Once a student accepts a placement at an agency, they are not permitted to accept an offer for full time, part time, or per diem employment at the placement agency that begins prior to the end of the internship requirements. Additionally, students are not permitted to complete their internship prior to the official end of the field education calendar in order to accept an offer for employment at the agency

### **Procedure for Failed Placement Planning**

Students will be required to meet with the Office of Field Education for a consultation meeting if they are offered three placements (during the placement season and throughout the corresponding academic year) and decline to accept any of them, and/or if they interviewed with three agencies and were not accepted for placement

The consultation meeting will include the student, the students' Academic Advisor, and the Office of Field Education. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss next steps for the students in relation to their field placement. At the conclusion of the consultation meeting, a written summary of any recommendation next steps will be forwarded to all parties.

### **Employer Based Field Placements**

The Field Offices recognizes the benefits of students completing Employer Based Field Placements. There are two Employer Based Field Placement Options. These placements are options for students that are currently working in an agency that provides social work services.

These placements are differentiated by the following:

- Employment-Based Internship (EBI): an option for students not currently in a social service position
- Work Residency Internship (WRI): an option for students employed in a social service position

The process for consideration for an Employer Based Placement is as follows:

1. Students must submit a completed proposal to the Field Education Office. Proposal Templates are distributed by the Director of Field Education.
2. The application is reviewed by the Program Chairperson and the Director of Field Education.



3. The agency and proposal must be approved by the Field Education Office.
4. The agency must be willing to enter into an Affiliation Agreement with Catholic University.

As part of the Employer Based Placement Proposal, students must complete the following to ensure there are assignments/supervisor separate from employment:

1. Summarize student-employee's current regular work assignments/duties.
2. Outline how a student's internship assignments will differ from current work assignments. Differences may include:
  3. Newly assigned clients or different type of clients
  4. Different mode(s) of intervention (e.g., client(s) assigned for therapy, leading groups, work with families)
  5. New macro projects, tasks, assignments (for CAPP and Combined MSW students)
  6. Other new activities (e.g., spring semester macro project for foundation year MSW student, community outreach, conducting needs assessment)
7. Discuss plans for enhanced supervision (minimum of 1 hour/week), e.g., will review and discuss process recordings, will develop treatment plan, will discuss relevant theory applied in working with specific clients during enhanced supervisory session, will develop therapy group, will evaluate a program.
8. Indicate who will provide the field internship supervision and, if known, the weekly time scheduled for supervision.
9. State plans for student's work/field schedule.

In order for an Employer Based Placement to be approved, the student must be an employee in good standing, is required to have been employed with the agency for at least one year, and must maintain employment during the internship period. Students may only utilize this option for one year of field placement. Therefore, it is critical to plan accordingly, when considering completing one of the two years of field placement as an EBI or WRI. The student will be required to complete the alternate year at an agency not affiliated with their employment, unless with prior approval by the Director of Field.

Students may not accept employment at their field agency while their internship is still ongoing. After the internship has ended, students may change their roles and accept employment, if offered. If a student has a prior relationship with an agency, the student should not seek or accept placement at that agency. Examples of a prior relationship include, but are not limited to: Prior or current client; Prior or present employee; Prior or current volunteer; Has a relative or other close relation among the staff of the agency.

## Challenges in the Field Placement

There are situations in which a student may experience challenges in their field placement due to a number of reasons. In the event a problem should arise with the placement, the following is recommended:

1. The initial problem solving should begin with the Field Instructor and student.
2. If this is unsuccessful, the assigned Field Liaison should be contacted for support and guidance. The Field Liaison will mediate the problem by scheduling a joint conference with the student and the field instructor to explore their concerns.
3. During the joint conference, an action plan should be developed which includes: a clear identification of problems in learning and teaching; specification of learning objectives to be achieved and behavior changes expected; any necessary actions and procedures to be taken; and a time frame to review the progress made on the action plan.
4. If after a joint conference there are still issues, a Field Review will be held. This review includes the Student, Field Instructor, any additional agency staff members who are involved with the student, the Field Liaison, the Students' Academic Advisor, and the Field Office.

### A Field Review will be scheduled:

- If efforts to address concerns previously were unsuccessful.
- If a student is experiencing challenges in placement.
- If an agency reports concerns about students' performance in placement.
- If the agency is looking to terminate a student from placement.
- If the student reports concerns and would like to be removed from placement.
- If a student receives a Failing grade during their Field Evaluation.
- Other situations not listed that may relate to concerns about the student or agency at a field placement.

It is expected that most placement concerns can be resolved through a joint conference or Field Review. However, as agencies voluntarily supervise students, they have the right to terminate an internship. Following a Field Review, it will be determined whether a student returns to the placement site, or if the Field Office will assist in facilitating a new referral for placement for the student.

*Students may not terminate a placement without approval from the Director of Field Education first. Students that prematurely end a placement risk receiving a Failing Grade for Field Seminar.*

## **Field Education Calendar**

All NCSSS Students will receive a Field Education Calendar at the beginning of each semester (Fall Semester, Spring Semester, Summer Semester). The Calendar includes Holiday/Breaks, Due Dates, Registration Dates, and Semester Check-In Points. The Calendar is sent to all agency partners who are confirmed as placement sites for students in field. The Field Calendar is available on the NCSSS Field Education Website.

## **Placement Length and Scheduling**

Students cannot discontinue, terminate, end, or complete placement early. Field education is a year-long course that is divided into two semesters and the transition is marked by the completion of the required minimum hours and semester evaluation indicating the student's performance. Students are in field placement when the agency is open, except as indicated on the field education calendar. If other arrangements are necessary for the student and/or the agency, a member of the Office of Field Education must give prior approval. Students are not in field placement when the agency is closed. If the agency is closed on a student's regularly scheduled placement day these hours must be made up. The agency is expected to respect any student's request for religious observance or school sponsored activities/conferences. Students are not required to attend field on days the University is closed. However, if a student is scheduled to be in field during a day when the University is closed, the Student's Field Instructor must be made aware in advance, and a plan for making up the hours should be developed. Any adjustments to a student's weekly Field Schedule should always be discussed between the Field Instructor and the Student for discussion and approval.

Students and Field Instructors must monitor student hours to ensure they are on track and not falling behind. Students are required to complete their field education hours during the semester in which they are enrolled in field seminar. Students must work with their Field Instructor to develop a plan of making up hours that will assist them in meeting the minimum program requirements. Students can also participate in Field Office Programming throughout the year that can count toward overall Field hours. Students who do not meet the seminar course requirements will receive an Incomplete until hours and assignments are met.

## Absences

Students are expected to attend field placement on all regularly scheduled days. If a student is unable to attend field on a scheduled day, they are required to make alternate arrangements with their Field Instructor to make up the missed hours. **Any changes to a student's established field schedule must be discussed in advance and approved by the Field Instructor.**

### *Absence Policy and Procedures:*

- Students are not required to attend field placement on days when the University is officially closed. Students are expected to make up those hours if the days fall on a regularly scheduled Field Day.
- Absences due to illness, religious observances, agency holidays, or other approved reasons must be made up by the student.
- Students are allowed one sick day per semester without a make-up requirement. Any additional time missed must be made up.
- In the event of an absence or lateness, the student must notify their Field Instructor prior to the start of the field day. Communication must occur during business hours and should not rely solely on email or text messages. The student must confirm that the Field Instructor has received the message.
- Students should review the Field Calendar with their Field Instructors at the beginning of each semester to ensure there is clarity around university breaks, closures, and the academic calendar.
- Students are expected to demonstrate promptness and regular attendance throughout their field placement.
- A plan to make up missed hours should be discussed and agreed upon immediately upon the student's return to field.
- For extended illnesses or ongoing challenges, a formal make-up plan must be developed in consultation with the student, the Field Instructor, and the Office of Field Education.
- Students are encouraged to work proactively with their Field Instructor to develop a contingency plan for making up hours missed due to unexpected agency closures, weather events, or other emergencies.
- The Office of Field Education will provide further guidance and expectations in response to national or local events that may impact field placements.

## **Malpractice and Automobile Insurance**

NCSSS has mandatory professional liability (malpractice insurance) coverage for students. The policy provides \$1,000,000 per claim and \$3,000,000 in the aggregate. Students are billed for this coverage when registered for Field/Field Seminar. Field instructors and agencies may request proof of coverage through the field office.

The University does not provide automobile liability coverage to students. Some agencies require students to use their own automobiles for field related activities. Students are strongly discouraged from using their own automobiles to transport clients and assume all liability if they elect to do so.

## **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)**

Neither NCSSS, nor its faculty, staff, or students are, as such, entities covered under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). However, because NCSSS faculty, staff, and students may require and have access to “individually identifiable health information” (IIHI) in order to meet field education objectives, NCSSS will advise its faculty, staff, and students to treat all IIHI accessed during field education in accordance with the HIPAA “Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information.” Faculty, staff and students will also be expected to adhere to any individual mental health or health care facility policy/procedure not addressed in this document but governing the facility to which they or their students are assigned for field education. The final HIPAA privacy regulations can be found at 45 CFR Part 164.

Some NCSSS students will have HIPAA training in an employment setting or will receive HIPAA training in their placement setting. In these cases, students may submit documentation showing successful completion of the training to the Office of Field Education by the end of their first semester in the field internship.

## **Professional Ethics and Conduct**

A profession has an obligation to articulate its basic values, ethical principles, and ethical standards, and the NASW Code of Ethics sets forth these values, principles, and standards to guide the conduct of social workers. The Code is relevant to all social workers and social work students, regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve. Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the NASW

Code of Ethics. The complete Social Work Code of Ethics can be found at:

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/Code/code.asp>

Students should be particularly aware of the following legal and ethical obligations:

- *Disclosure of Student Status* – Students must identify themselves as social work interns to clients and in written documentation.
- *Mandatory Reporting/Duty to Warn*– students are expected to follow the Code of Ethics and state law and report incidents of suspected neglect and abuse, and fulfill obligations related to suicide and homicide. Students should be aware of agency policy related to mandated reporting/duty to warn and discuss with their field instructor their ethical and legal obligation, while adhering to agency policy. Additional information on duty to warn by state is available at <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/mental-health>

### **Organizational Policies**

Students must comply with the regulations and policies of the agency, particularly as related to the internship. The field instructor is responsible for training students on the policies of the agency, with particular attention given to conflict between social work ethics and agency policy.

### **Background Checks, Drug Screenings, Health Status**

Some agencies require health screenings, verification of immunizations, criminal background checks, and/or drug screening prior to beginning the field placement. NCSSS does not require or facilitate such requirements of students. Rather, the field instructor and/or the Human Resource Department of the agency should work directly with the student to ensure that students meet agency requirements. Students are responsible for obtaining any required background check and assume associated costs or fees.

Some students can expect to be drug tested during the interview process at their placement site. Some agencies also conduct random drug screenings. Students are strongly encouraged not to engage in any recreational/illegal drug use during their enrollment. Students are referred to the Student Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Policy, found at <http://policies.cua.edu/studentlife/studentconduct/alcoholdrugs.cfm>. Should a student test positive for unlawful use of drugs during their field placement, they will be terminated from the placement and referred for a review. An agency can terminate a student for violating agency drug and alcohol policies.

## **Students with Disabilities**

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work or field placement, contact the Catholic University Office of Disability Support Services (D.S.S.).

The Office of Disability Support Services, The Catholic University of America  
620 Michigan Ave NE, 202 Pryzbyla Center  
Washington, D.C. 20064  
Phone: 202-319-5211, Fax: 202-319-5126  
[CUA-DSS@cua.edu](mailto:CUA-DSS@cua.edu)

The DSS will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation are confidential. The Office of Field Education may discuss accommodations needed for a student with a field instructor to enhance the student's learning experience.

## **Safety and Security of Students**

The safety of students is a shared concern between the field office, agency, and students. The partnership between the field office, agency and student seeks to reduce risks related to the internship and social work practice. The field office and agency provide information and training on safety in the field. The student is responsible for abiding by agency policies and implementing strategies to reduce their own risk.

The Field Education Office and the agency are responsible for collaborating in order to support student safety in field education. Upon the beginning of a placement, during a mandatory Field Orientation, students and field instructors receive training focusing on safety consideration in the field. Seminar discussions reinforce safety strategies, and liaisons are instructed to regularly check in with their students regarding safety concerns in their placements. Field agencies are expected to provide measures to protect the safety of the student, specifically in relation to the services provided by that agency. Field instructors are advised that the student's first week in the placement should be allotted for agency orientation, including becoming familiar with the agency building, how to conduct oneself in the field, as well as agency specific protocols for dealing with potentially dangerous individuals. During the vetting process of field placements, the Office of Field Education asks prospective sites their plan for student safety and how it is enforced.

Students should be given the same consideration as employees regarding all aspects of safety within the field setting and assignments. For example, if staff are issued cell phones for community visits in case of emergencies, then students should be provided with similar accommodations in all circumstances. Field sites are reminded that students are in a learning role and that every precaution must be taken to ensure student safety. It is always the responsibility of the field site to ensure the student's safety during field placement hours.

Field sites are strongly encouraged to have policies and procedures regarding employee and student safety. These policies should be reviewed, prioritized, and reinforced on a regular basis.

Community/Home Visits are an integral component of many field placements. Agencies are expected to take appropriate measures to minimize danger and ensure the safety of students. The same safeguards of good practice provided to agency staff apply to students with additional support when warranted. NCSSS expects that field instructors provide appropriate and adequate guidelines and support to students undertaking this task. It is the student's responsibility to follow up with their agency field instructor for training and best practices of community/home visits.

During the initial weeks in a field site, students are to become familiar with the safety aspects of their field site's culture and procedures that could affect an individual's safety. Students should discuss with their field instructor or task supervisor areas that may be of potential risk to physical safety and health of the student, clients and colleagues.



### Critical Incidents

- A Critical Incident is any unusual occurrence that involves student safety in the course of conducting his/her duties and responsibilities as a field practicum student.
- The student shall advise the field instructor immediately after a critical incident has occurred.
- The field instructor and/or student shall notify the Field Office that an incident has occurred and submit the critical incident form.
- The Director of Field Education shall notify the Dean, the Program Chair, the field liaison, or other faculty as appropriate for action and/or follow-up as needed.
- When appropriate, CUA personnel, e.g., the Office of General Counsel, should be notified and forwarded a copy of the Critical Incident Form and a written report of any additional action that has been taken.

### **Changes in, Discontinuance of, or Discharge from Placement**

Changes in, or discontinuance of, placement prior to the scheduled completion date of the semester is a serious step involving careful evaluation. The agency, the student or the school may initiate consideration of such a step. It is expected that in situations where this is being considered, considerable prior activity has occurred in which the problems and issues have been discussed and worked on between the student, field instructor, field liaison, and other faculty as appropriate. Field instructors and students should initiate and maintain contact with the field liaison as early as possible and before problems appear serious enough to warrant consideration of discontinuance.

Even though every effort is made to arrange educationally sound placements for students, it may become apparent that a setting is not providing an adequate educational experience for the student. This may be due to a variety of factors which were either not anticipated, or could not have been anticipated prior to placement, such as: lack of suitable assignments, agency problems or pressures interfering with the educational experience. Students are urged to bring these problems to the attention of the field liaison as soon as they occur. Every effort is made to help resolve such problems. Where this is not possible, and after several meetings to problem solve the issue, a change of placement may be considered.

When the student's termination in placement has been initiated as a result of the student's difficulty and/or inability in meeting agency learning and performance expectations, a Performance Improvement Plan will be issued and a meeting with the Director of Field and Program Chair is required. The outcome of these procedures will determine further field placement planning. Effort will be made to arrange placement at another agency if educationally indicated. An immediate transfer to another agency is not guaranteed. Decisions regarding credit for the hours worked at the first field placement agency will be made on the

basis of the student's performance. The student's academic advisor, field liaison, and field faculty member must approve a student's voluntary withdrawal from field education. When a student is re-placed and begins a new field placement they must learn about the new agency and become oriented to the structure, services, requirements and expectations of the new placement. This adjustment requires time.

Whatever the basis for the student's leaving an agency prior to the planned end date, students are expected to terminate their agency commitments in a responsible and orderly fashion. This includes meeting with the agency and School to determine what termination procedures must be followed. In addition, the student is expected to submit a Discontinuance of Placement Form.

If a student is discharged from two placements at any point in their course of study, a Field Review will be scheduled between the Field Director, Program Chair, and Student's Academic Advisor, to discuss and evaluate all concerns and address their continuance in field education.

Students may not terminate a placement without approval from the Director of Field Education first. Students that prematurely end a placement risk receiving a Failing Grade for Field Seminar.

## **Expectations of the Student in Field Education**

### **Professional Behavior**

Students are expected to adhere to Competency One - Demonstrating Ethical and Professional Behavior and are accountable to clients, the agency, the community, the school, and the social work profession. Students are expected to embrace the NASW Code of Ethics and adhere to the University Code of Conduct. While students are matriculated in NCSSS they may not engage in private therapeutic intervention (work) with clients, unless they are licensed to engage in such practice as a result of possession of another professional degree, license, or certificate (ex. LMFT, LMHC, etc.). Students may only engage in such professional practice for which they are licensed or certified.

One of the principles enunciated in the NASW Code of Ethics is that "the social worker should not misrepresent professional qualifications, education, experience, or affiliations." Students are not to conceal from clients their student status, nor deliberately represent themselves as employees of the agency. A strongly suggested title for students is "Social Work Intern." Questions that arise on such matters as their limited time in at the agency and planned termination are to be dealt with honestly. As an extension of the classroom, field education students are expected to maintain the same values in placement. Students have both the right to learn and the responsibility to participate in and respect the learning process. As field education is considered an essential part of each student's curriculum, field instructors are expected to contact the Office of Field Education if they become concerned about their student's behavior at their agency/organization.

### **Professional Use of Social Media**

When placed in an agency students will come into contact with individuals who utilize social media for various reasons. Students must be aware of the ways that people can get information about them, connect with them and learn about their family and friends. It is important to look at social media not only from a personal perspective but from a professional one. Clients and staff of the agency will be able to view students as they present themselves through social media. It is important for social work students to maintain professional boundaries by maintaining private social media accounts for the duration of their social work program; by not initiating any friend or connection requests with clients, client's family and friends, or agency staff; and by declining any friend or connection requests from any clients, client's family and friends, or agency staff. Students should inform their field instructor if clients make a request to

connect with them on social media. Students should be guided by social work values and ethics and this responsibility extends to the virtual and technological world.

## **Responsibilities of the Student**

### **1. Responsibilities to Clients:**

- to practice social work in a disciplined manner and at the highest possible level of competence
- to work to maintain and improve social work skills, of one's own and others
- to offer service promptly, courteously, and without prejudice, putting the client's interests first, before one's own convenience
- to refrain from engaging in personal relationships of any kind with clients
- to refrain from accepting gifts from clients or their family
- to respect the privacy of clients, and their right to make use of service; and to ensure that clients are not exploited

### **2. Responsibilities to Field Setting:**

- to fully cooperate with the field instructor and other agency personnel with regard to expectations about learning and reporting responsibilities including documentation, identification of goals, problems, and needs
- to furnish all reports and other work required on time; to devote the full amount of time expected in the field; to respond flexibly when hours have to be modified because of client need or agency need; to notify agency of anticipated absences and/or lateness; to keep field instructor and agency informed of whereabouts on agency time
- to help field instructors define and keep an educational focus based on student learning needs
- to carry out service and other field activities in compliance with agency policy and practice, including home visits as indicated
- to evaluate agency policies and practices and work responsibly for their improvement
- to enhance agency efforts, when possible, through meeting of client need(s), development of new resources, public relations contacts, feedback, and sharing of new learning; and
- to discover how one's own learning experiences may simultaneously promote one's growth as a professional and augment the agency's capacity to function effectively

- to regularly attend field placement. Note: all missed field days/hours must be made up by the student.
3. Responsibilities to School:
- to maintain communication with both the field instructor, the field liaison, and Office of Field Education on issues related to the field experience
  - to provide feedback in classes from the field education experience
  - to fulfill all educational requirements including spending the full time expected in the field as usefully as possible
  - to participate in field education activities; and to responsibly budget time to allow for adequate attention to both class and field.
4. Responsibilities to Self:
- to identify learning needs and objectives
  - to be ethical in all activities
  - to complete field expectations
  - to apply self fully to learning and services
  - to demonstrate willingness to recognize the needs of the others in the field education partnership system (i.e., clients, workers, field instructor, field liaison, community);
  - to immediately discuss any issues with the field instructor; including any interpersonal issues that may be occurring in the working relationship with the field instructor.

### **Use of Agency Material for Class Assignments**

The student's experience in field education is an integral part of learning and case material is used in classroom education. Students must redact the material used in compliance with HIPAA so that client confidentiality is maintained.

### **Issues with Field Agency/Field Instruction**

There may be instances in which students have concerns about their Field Placement Site and/or Field Instructor that they do not believe can be brought up directly with their instructor. In this case, students are advised to bring these concerns directly to their Field Liaison, and/or the Office of Field Education for further discussion and support.

## **Expectations of the Placement Site/Field Setting**

### **Supervision**

The agency field instructor must provide consistent and reliable supervision with a weekly scheduled individual meeting with the student as the minimum requirement. The weekly meeting must be at least 1 hour. Group supervision is a helpful addition to individual supervision. Supervision varies somewhat by agency; however, it is expected to total approximately one hour of face to face individual or group supervision per week for all students in field.

Students may also have a task supervisor who is a non-MSW. The task supervisor may make case and task assignments, provide guidance on the day-to-day operation of the agency, and serve as the contact for the student in the agency. In situations where the student has both a task supervisor and social work supervisor, there should be collaboration between the two supervisors in evaluating the student.

NCSSS requires field instructors to review the agency safety protocols with their student(s) as well as review anything specific they want their student to follow. Safety issues should be incorporated into supervision so that students may discuss their concerns and/or gain information on how to deal with a safety issue that might present in their practice.

A supervision agenda may include the following topics:

- Administrative issues
- Progress related to field site assignments and developing proficiency on the corresponding practice behaviors
- Reflection on privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice issues
- Reflection on personal and professional growth and skill development

### **Documentation**

Agencies vary in the kind of documentation required for their records. Students are expected to maintain appropriate and timely records of their activities and to comply with the agency's use of forms and records and to respect confidentiality. In addition, it is required that field instructors and students utilize process recordings as a learning tool.

### **Learning Plans**

After students are placed, the first formal review of student progress in field occurs when the student submits the Learning Plan to their Field Liaison for approval. The Learning Plan is a roadmap for the academic year. It has four major purposes:

1. To describe the goals that the student and field instructor have formulated regarding learning assignments, responsibilities and skill development

2. To assess the student's level of competency at the beginning of the field education experience
3. To describe the student's current and anticipated assignments
4. To identify educational objectives for the academic year. The Education Plan is completed once per year and should be completed by the field instructor with the student present. The student is required to make comments and submit those comments with the Plan. The completed education plan is submitted to the student's Field Liaison. The Learning plan will be reviewed by the field liaison. The learning plan facilitates coordination between the school and the agency. It provides early identification of issues related to workload and assignments and offers an opportunity for the field instructor and student to identify any other issues that should be dealt with between the agency and School

### **Developing Student Tasks and Assignments**

The Placement Site is tasked with developing the workload of each student at the agency. The workload should be developed after review of the Competencies required of the student's placement, whether generalist or specialized practice.

The workload of each student should include:

- Assignments that emphasize micro, mezzo, and/or macro practice and include exposure to all of practice modalities.
- Assignments must include in-person opportunities and may include remote opportunities.
- Assignments should provide contact with client systems (individuals, groups, families, communities, organizations) and/or constituencies.
- An adequate number of assignments that provide an opportunity to work with people or issues encompassing varying ages, cultures, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, life styles, and the historically marginalized and oppressed.
- Experience in providing concrete services in areas such as, employment, housing, transportation, finance, education, legal, health, etc.
- Experience in intake, collaboration, use of consultation, referrals, assessments, research, committee work, community contacts, and/or work with groups.
- Experience in identifying and/or working to develop services for unmet client and agency needs.
- Experience in long and/or short-term interventions with client systems.

## **The Working Relationship of Field Education**

Field Education is most successful when there is collaboration and ongoing discussion that are specific to support the needs of the student and the field placement site. There are various moving parts within Field Education, specifically: The Student, The Field Agency/Placement Site, The Field Instructor/Task Supervisor, The Field Liaison, The Field Office, and other faculty and administrative staff supports of NCSSS.

### **Affiliation Agreement**

NCSSS welcomes the opportunity to establish a formal affiliation with field placement agencies. All required policies of new agencies are identified within the affiliation agreement of the Catholic University of America and the identified Field Site. The requirements include an agency's ability to provide educational experiences and assignments, identified insurance requirements, and meet all other conditions in the affiliation agreement. All field placements must have a signed affiliation agreement before students can begin a placement.

The university requires that a Statement of Agreement between The Catholic University of America and the Agency be signed by both parties and maintained on file in the Office of Field Education. This statement formally recognizes mutual expectations and responsibilities of all parties involved in field education. Any proposed amendments to the agreement must be reviewed and approved by the University General Counsel prior to obtaining signatures. The agreement renews automatically, unless the Agency requires annual renewal, or either party chooses to terminate the agreement. Students may not begin field placement until an active Affiliation Agreement has been developed.

### **Agency Selection**

NCSSS selects agencies for field education whose orientation and practice are consistent with the mission of the University. Prior to acceptance, agencies submit information about their services and describe anticipated learning experiences available for students. An Affiliation Agreement is completed and signed when the agency and School have agreed that the agency will act as a field education site. It is the responsibility of the agency to inform the Office of Field Education of any changes within the agency.

The Office of Field Education is committed to social change and will seek new arenas of social work practice, and to extend the parameters of professional practice. One way of accomplishing this is to use new arenas for field education settings. When such a setting is selected, field education faculty assists in the development of an educationally sound field experience.



Agencies are evaluated to ensure that:

- The agency exhibits a professional level of practice
- The agency leadership supports graduate professional education and is willing to provide an atmosphere in which meaningful education can take place.
- This includes ensuring the field instructor, who is an integral part of the agency, has a MSW degree from an accredited school of social work, is licensed in New York State, and has availability to support the student(s) educational needs and requirements.
- The agency is able to provide a variety of graduated and meaningful learning experiences through in-person and virtual micro, mezzo, and macro assignments related to the student's educational needs.
- Agencies partner with NCSSS in training students for professional practice in a variety of settings.
- Agencies should be open and willing to encourage students to implement practice approaches reflecting classroom learning.
- The agency offers opportunities for the student to participate in staff meetings, conferences, and the usual work of the agency whenever it is appropriate.

### **Functions of The Field Office**

The Field Office is comprised of the Director of Field Education and the Field Office Coordinator. The Field Office plans, implements, and evaluates the field practicum experiences for all students completing field placement requirements at NCSSS.

The general functions of the Field Office include:

- Implements field education policies and procedures
- Develops field education trainings and orientation materials
- Selecting field education agencies in keeping with the established and approved policies of the school and affiliation agreements
- Facilitates student placement to field placement sites
- Provides support and guidance to Students, Field Instructors, and Field Liaisons, throughout the duration of a placement

### **Functions of the Field Liaison and Field Seminar**

The Office of Field Education assigns a field liaison to each practice course section. Field liaisons maintain regular contact with field education instructors throughout the year. The field liaison serves all students enrolled in that section. Students are expected to maintain enrollment in the

same practice course section for the academic year in order to minimize interruption in their education. Once a student's placement is confirmed, both the student and the agency will receive the appropriate contact information, and the Office of Field Education keeps a record of student placements and up to date contact information. Field Liaisons meet the field education instructors at the Field Education Instructor Orientation at the beginning of the semester. Email and telephone communication between the liaison and field education instructor begins during the first few weeks of the semester. Teaching collaboration is enhanced through the field instructor-field liaison relationship to ensure support for both the student and instructor. Field liaisons are representatives of NCSSS who coordinate and consult with the field instructor, the student, other agency staff, and the practice course professor to ensure that everyone is working within an appropriate learning plan. The field liaison is available to discuss student progress, needs or problems with the field instructor at any time during the academic year. If a field instructor has questions or concerns, the field liaison or in that person's absence, a member of the field education faculty should be contacted for discussion of the issues/concerns. Students are encouraged to discuss their placement with their field liaison at any time during the year and to discuss any issues/concerns they have regarding their placement. The field liaison reads each student's learning plan, evaluations, field assignments, and reviews student's timesheets for accuracy. The field liaison communicates with the field instructor and student during the academic year through a variety of ways including field visits, email and phone contact. This allows for discussion of the student's learning and supervisory needs with all members of the field education team. The agency visit contributes to the on-going collaboration between the field liaison and field instructors regarding student performance and education

The Field Seminar is an essential component of the student's field experience. The course is required in conjunction with field. The weekly seminar is conducted by an NCSSS faculty member. The field liaison/seminar instructor facilitates group discussion in small group seminars, and is also the faculty liaison to the field instructor and student at the agency. The campus-based course offers students the opportunity to discuss casework, challenges and learning opportunities. The seminar instructor will communicate regularly with student and field instructor regarding progress in the placement, and will make a visit to assess progress by the end of the Fall semester. The site visit will address learning plan goals, progress, and any questions/concerns of instructor and student. The grade for field placement/seminar is calculated in combination with field evaluation and seminar assignments.

## **Field Seminar Attendance and Participation Policy**

Participation in Field Seminar—whether through on-campus sessions or asynchronous online modules—is a required and essential component of the field education curriculum. Field Seminar supports student integration of classroom learning with field experiences and promotes professional development through discussion, reflection, and collaboration with peers and faculty.

- Field Seminar is a Pass/Fail course, and students must demonstrate consistent attendance and meaningful participation to earn a passing grade.
- Students are expected to attend and actively participate in all Field Seminar sessions (whether on-campus or through required online discussion activities).
- Missing more than two seminar sessions or scheduled assignment without documented extenuating circumstances, will place the student at risk of failing the course.
- Asynchronous participation (e.g., in online discussion boards or reflections) must be submitted by the due dates to count as attendance. Late or incomplete submissions may be considered absences.
- Students who anticipate missing a session should communicate with the Field Seminar Instructor in advance whenever possible.
- Repeated absences or non-participation, even in a pass/fail course, are considered unprofessional and may result in a formal review by the Director of Field Education and/or an Academic Advisor.
- Students who miss more than two seminar sessions or due date expectations must meet with their instructor or Field Director to develop a corrective action plan.
- Exceptions to this policy (e.g., for medical, personal, or emergency circumstances) will be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Field Director.
- Students receiving ADA accommodations must work with Disability Support Services to arrange appropriate attendance modifications.

## **Functions of the Field Instructor**

Field Instructors are selected on the basis of their commitment to social work and general agreement with the Mission of NCSSS and Field Education. Field Instructors must demonstrate an acceptable level of social work practice, an ability to supervise students, and an understanding of the conceptual framework within which field education is practiced. Agencies participate with the school in training students for professional practice in a variety of settings. Field instructors must therefore be open and willing to encourage students to implement practice approaches reflecting classroom learning and which may not be part of the agency's on-going array of services or modalities. In keeping with the mission and the practice

orientation of the school, interventions should include systems that impact clients' lives and problems.

#### Requirements for Field Instructors

- All prospective agencies and field instructors are made aware of the field instructor requirements during the initial agency screening meeting, and is discussed with the agency prior to beginning the affiliation process.
- All field instructors are required to hold a Master of Social Work degree from a CSWE-accredited college or university.
- Field instructors supervising students in the Generalist Practice Year, must have licensure at the LGSW level.
- Field instructors supervising students in the Specialized Practice Year, must have advanced clinical licensure (LICSW, LCSW-C).
- Field instructors must have a minimum of 2 years post-MSW professional experience.
- They must be employed with the field agency for at least one year prior to serving as a field instructor. In addition, they must have the approval of their supervisor to take on this additional responsibility.

If a potential field setting is able to provide a field placement that provides strong competency-based learning opportunities, however, they do not have a field instructor that holds a CSWE-accredited social work degree or does not have the required experience, the department hires a social worker that meets the credentials as an adjunct, external field instructor. The credentials for the external supervisor are as follows:

- All field instructors are required to hold a Master of Social Work degree from a CSWE-accredited college or university.
- Field instructors supervising undergraduate seniors or generalist year MSW students, must have licensure at the LGSW level.
- Field instructors supervising students in the specialized practice placement, must have advanced clinical licensure (LICSW, LCSW-C). Their credentials are verified via the Field Office during the Agency Affiliation Process.
- The identified field instructor provides weekly supervision to the student and participates in any field related meetings involving the student.
- If an adjunct instructor is the student's supervisor, there must be an identified Task Supervisor at the agency who would work with the student on a daily basis at their placement. The Task Supervisor is someone on site who sees the student daily for student support, task assignment, monitoring administrative duties of the agency.

Field Instructors are expected to:

- Demonstrate familiarity with the CSWE Competencies. Field Instructors develop and identify learning opportunities for each competency in relation to the curriculum, and develop assignments. A breakdown of the competencies will be shared with you.
- Provide weekly one-on-one supervision for a minimum of one hour.
- Provide review and approval of student materials (Process Recordings, Case Assignments)
- Monitor student hours, approve timesheets and log of hours at the end of each semester.
- Provide clear and constructive feedback to students on an ongoing basis.
- Collaborate and develop Learning Plan within the students' first month of a new placement.
- Complete and submit Early Assessment, Mid-Year Assessment (end of first semester) and Final Evaluation (end of the placement).
- Serve as a resource for students as they navigate field work and complete assignments.
- Provide feedback and maintain regular communication to students' Field Liaison.

### **Functions of Task Supervisor**

At times, agencies will provide supervision from someone other than the field instructor; defined as a Task Supervisor. Task Supervisors can be a social worker who does not meet the requirements to be a field instructor; a non-social worker; and/or someone who has expertise different from the field instructor for one part of the student's assignment. A task supervisor is optional and not all agencies provide this type of supervision. To have this arrangement implemented successfully, field instructors are expected to retain overall responsibility for the student's experience and remain accountable for the quality of all teaching. The field instructor must continue to meet for formal supervision with the student, to maintain primary responsibility for the teaching of social work, and for the evaluation of the student's performance. The task supervisor may also meet regularly with the student. The field instructor must maintain ongoing communication with the task supervisor. At the time of formal written evaluation at the end of each semester, the task supervisor may either confer with the field instructor or have their assessment included in the body of the field instructor's evaluation. It is the responsibility of the student to maintain clear, open, and consistent communication with the task and field instructors.

### **Communication and the Site Visit**

Successful field placements rely on regular and consistent communication throughout the duration of the placement. It is expected that Field liaisons have regular contact with Field

Instructors/placement sites throughout each semester, and that the student is bringing up any concerns or updates with both their Field Liaison and Field Instructor. The Field Office is available as a resource and contact throughout the year, as needed.

Field liaisons make contact with each field instructor and student throughout the semester. As part of the monitoring process, contacts and visits provide an opportunity to discuss with the field instructor, student, agency administration and/or any other staff that has been working with the student the student's assignments, skill level, knowledge base and value base. This allows field liaison to discuss the student's learning and supervisory needs with all members of the field education team. In addition, NCSSS stays informed about the student experience and progress in the field through contact with the agency, evaluations submitted by the field instructor, student discussions with classroom faculty, student presentations in practice courses, and student field education assignments.

Upon a student beginning any new placement, the assigned field liaison contacts the student and field instructor to arrange the required field site meeting to evaluate student's progress. One agency site visit is required in the first semester of a student starting a placement in order to monitor the student's progress and evaluate the learning opportunities in the agency. This is to make a connection between the agency and the school as well as begin the working relationship for the field placement duration.

During the site visit, the student is expected to:

- Explain and discuss how the field site operates, and how they have acclimated to the setting
- Discuss their learning assignments and justifications and how these fit with related progress on the practice behaviors and competency development
- Help students identify skills developed and growing edge opportunities.
- Discuss and reflect on the progress they have made with regard to their personal and professional growth and progress related to their skill development
- Review remaining field education requirements for the term.

Students are also asked about how they are using supervision, critical thinking, and self-care, as well as what concerns, issues, or ethical dilemmas have surfaced during the term. Field liaisons may also ask students to reflect on how they are integrating what they are learning in class with what they are learning in field. Field instructor feedback is also provided and reviewed during the site visit.

The robust support provided to both student and instructor comes from a multi-level approach to field education whereby the Director of Field Education, Field Office Coordinator, and the Liaisons are available to field agencies and field instructors should any need arise. Additional site visits are scheduled if it is found that a student is having difficulties in field placement.

## **Monitoring Students in Field**

Students' education at their field sites is monitored by field instructors and the assigned field liaison. Monitoring requirements are the same for all students and include:

- Weekly supervision with the field instructor and task supervisor
- Participation in weekly field seminar
- Participation in the completion of at least one site visit meeting per placement involving the student, field instructor, task supervisor (if applicable), and the assigned field faculty
- Periodic review of the students' Learning Plan throughout the semester.
- Field faculty availability for check-ins as needed throughout each term.
- Review and signoff on the final evaluation

Students are also monitored in their placements through the weekly field education seminar, taught by the seminar instructor. Field seminar for on-campus students meets in-person, once weekly, for 1.5 hours. The structure of the field seminar is a group setting where students have the opportunity to discuss their field placement with their peers, receiving feedback and discussing the application of theory to practice. The seminar instructor also serves as the liaison for the student, field education instructor, and agency. The seminar instructor monitors the student's progress through weekly seminars, process recordings, evaluations, and communication with the field education instructor.

The online field seminar course is asynchronous and does not have a standing or weekly meeting time. Students engage with their classmates and instructor via discussion boards virtually where they share feedback on their placements and progress in field education. The seminar instructor monitors the student's progress through process recordings, evaluations, and communication with the field education instructor. The seminar instructor/liaison completes at least one site visit in the fall semester and additional visits as indicated. The field liaison may request to meet virtually, one on one with students, throughout the semester to discuss progress or concerns in field education.

Each semester of field education, students are monitored by review of the Confirmation of Practicum Form, and field faculty monitoring of the online education agreement including assignment identification and review of student justifications. Beginning competency is expected in foundation field instruction, while demonstration of progressive learning is expected in advanced field education. With each successive term, students are able to work more independently, and with increasingly difficult or complex field assignments. The review of student assignments and subsequent justifications helps the field faculty ensure students have the opportunities and engage in activities to develop the core competencies at an increasingly advanced level.

## **Evaluating Field Setting Effectiveness**

Each field placement setting is evaluated based on the agency's learning opportunities and quality of field instruction. The Office of Field Education assesses field setting effectiveness first by developing affiliation agreements that are assessed by the Field Office to be able to provide generalist/specialized practice field placement opportunities. Once the student is in field placement, the faculty field liaison must approve the field learning contract to ensure field placement activities provide the student with the appropriate experience. Any issues concerning field setting effectiveness are discussed between the faculty field liaison as well as the Director of Field Education.

Consistent monitoring by the field liaisons plays a vital role in evaluating student learning and field setting effectiveness. The learning plan is developed between the field education instructor and student. The learning plan addresses the competencies and behaviors and identifies learning opportunities and activities in the agency. At the end of each semester, student learning is evaluated using the field education evaluation form. Field education setting effectiveness is evaluated using a variety of tools. The student evaluation forms are assessed for areas with larger numbers of NA (Not Applicable) or IE (Insufficient Evidence). Each agency visit is documented with a report from the liaison, which includes an evaluative statement about the agency's learning opportunities and quality of field instruction.

Students participate in a weekly field seminar in which they provide feedback about their field experiences to their faculty field seminar liaison. The field office is in regular communication with the field seminar liaisons to address concerns as they arise for students in field. At the end of a student's field placement, they are asked to complete an evaluation of their placement experience and the quality of field instruction received. MSW students also complete an exit survey where they review field opportunities offered to them and how they were able to demonstrate the nine CSWE required competencies in their placement. Student and faculty feedback on sites is utilized to enhanced placement opportunities, and assist the Field Office in determining if an agency will remain a field placement site in the future. The field office is in the process of developing a new field evaluation to be utilized by students, faculty liaisons, and field liaisons, to be implemented by May 2024.

## **Continuing Dialog with Field Education Settings and Field Instructors**

The Office of Field Education conducts regular outreach to Field Instructors to assess progress of their students and provide feedback. The University offers field education instructors library privileges, including access to online journals. Field Liaisons maintain contact with field education Instructors throughout the year, and field office staff members are available as needed. The Field Office is currently working to develop an end of the year conference for field instructors and faculty liaisons, which is an opportunity to review the previous year and address any program concerns.



## **The Student Evaluation Process**

The evaluation of the student's performance in field education is an important aspect of the student's professional development. Evaluation is a mutual process between the field instructor and student and entails an ongoing process of assessment. Evaluation discussions may be held at any time. Students' experience in field education is evaluated formally multiple times throughout a students' course in field education. The Final Field Evaluation is submitted upon completion of all required field education hours, concurrent with the completion of Field Seminar II.

The written evaluations should reflect prior discussions between the field instructor and the student and describe progress and areas for further development. It should be definitive about the boundaries of competence. The field instructor is responsible for completing the evaluation. The student is evaluated throughout the year in relation to the nine competency behaviors. The goal is for the student to achieve the competency standards of their current year. The student must be given the opportunity to read the evaluation. The field instructor and student then discuss it and may agree on changes. Both submit the completed evaluation. The student then completes the student comments section. The comments are written by the student and should reflect the student's perspective on their experience. The student's submission verifies that they have read the evaluation. In addition to the content, submission by the field instructor verifies for both the School and student that the student has completed the required number of field education hours for the semester/year. It is the student's responsibility to follow up with the field instructor to ensure that the evaluation(s) are completed in a timely manner. The completed evaluation is submitted to the Office of Field Education via the Field Liaison. It is School policy not to provide copies of evaluations to any one, entity, or prospective employer, with the exception of faculty and University personnel. Students should keep a copy of their evaluations for future needs.

## **Grading**

In order to complete field, students must be performing satisfactorily on their evaluations. The Placement Site provides the student with a Pass or Fail grade on their final evaluation at the end of each semester of field. If a student is evaluated to be at a level less than satisfactory, the student, field instructor, and field liaison will meet to discuss concerns and identify a plan for assisting the student in improving skill development. Students who receive a Failing Grade in any of their Field Education Evaluations will have a Field Review scheduled with the Director of Field Education.

NCSSS assumes responsibility for final decisions on all educational matters. The student receives an A grade for field following the completion of the semesters' placement requirements and seminar course requirements. The student will receive a grade of Pass or Fail each semester for the 3-credit Field Instruction/Integrative Seminar by the Field Liaison/Seminar Instructor. The final grade is based on Field Instruction (50%) and Seminar work (50%). If students receive a Passing Grade on their Evaluation but have not met the

Attendance/Participation and Assignment expectations of Field Seminar, they are at risk of Failing the course. Grade assignment is in accordance with the University grading system found in the CUA Student Handbook.

### **Orientation and Training**

Orientation is important for both the field instructor and the student. All field instructors are required to attend the Orientation to Field Instruction Training prior to the start of field in the fall. NCSSS encourages all field instructors to attend the orientation and thank you conferences yearly. This annual orientation is offered virtually via a tele-conferencing platform for field education instructors. It is required for all agencies who will serve as a placement site. This orientation provides instructors with information about the University, as well as NCSSS, and includes various training on how to address situations with students in field education, as well as training on Field Education policies and protocols. Liaisons maintain contact with field education instructors throughout the year, and field office staff members are available as needed.

Annual Orientation is offered and is mandatory every year prior to the beginning of the traditional school year in August. This annual orientation is offered virtually via a tele-conferencing platform for field education instructors. Orientation is required for all agencies who will serve as a placement site for both the online and on campus program options. Training options are the same for all agency instructors, whether they are new or have already been established as instructors. Orientation and field instructor training is combined. Orientation is required for all on an annual basis as field education is constantly being updated. If individuals cannot attend, a recording of the Orientation is sent out for access. This is to ensure all receive the content as well as can use it as a reference. The materials utilized during the orientation are sent out to all field instructors and agency sites. The Field Office follows up with those unable to attend to make sure information was received and any questions can be answered. Orientation provides instructors with information about the University, as well as NCSSS, and includes various training on how to address situations with students in field education, as well as training on Field Education policies and protocols.

Once a student begins with an agency, the student should receive an agency-based orientation. This helps to set the tone for learning for the year. A well-planned orientation familiarizes the student to the agency, and defines roles, responsibilities, and boundaries for the student. Orientation for the student to the agency should include:

- A tour of the facility, office space, review of dress code, schedule and holiday schedule, use of phones, texting, etiquette at meetings, required forms, personnel/internship manuals, and reference materials.

- Review agency history, mission, funding sources, services, organizational chart
- Review policies and procedures, and social work code of ethics.
- Present procedures for documentation and record keeping.
- Discuss personal safety issues, training, and policies to protect student well-being

**Orientation and Training Materials are revised annually and are available for distribution via the Field Office.**

### **Field Advisory Committee**

Student education occurs within a framework of close partnerships between NCSSS and the field education site/agency. To continue to work collaboratively with agencies and field instructors, NCSSS has established a Field Advisory Committee. This Committee, chaired by the Director of Field Education, is the forum for discussing field issues as they relate to the educational needs of our students and the integration of these educational considerations into agencies that are used as field education sites. The Field Education Committee is composed of field instructors, classroom teaching faculty, field education faculty and students from the graduate, and undergraduate programs. The Committee addresses issues that impact the quality of student learning in the field. It assesses and acts on the relationship and relevance of field practice and curriculum as these pertain to the goals and mission of NCSSS. In addition, the Committee reviews policies and makes recommendations for changes and for new policies, serves as a forum for resolution of issues related to implementation of policies, and reviews and acts on exceptions to policy and where necessary, makes recommendations to the faculty of NCSSS.

## Closing

### Resources

The NCSSS Field Office is committed to supporting students during their field education experience and journey. As the signature pedagogy of social work education, we prioritize equipping Students, Field Placement Sites, Field Instructors, Field Liaisons, and other Field Faculty and Staff with the resources to support student success. The Field Office has developed supplemental Resource Guides and materials to enhance the field placement experience.

[These materials can be accessed via the following link.](#)

As we are continuously looking to improve our Program, we welcome all feedback and suggestions for what additional resources can be developed in order to support student success. You are encouraged to reach out to the Field Office with your feedback.

### Conclusion

Each student has unique field experiences and learning needs. The NCSSS Field Office is available year long to provide support to anyone involved in the process of field education. We look forward to seeing our student's success in field, and seek to equip each of them with the skills to advance their career following completion of our Field Program!

*NCSSS Office of Field Education*

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