



NCSSS Field Education: Welcome Packet 2025-2026



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Field Office Contact Information

Frank Gaetani, MSW LMSW
Director of Field Education and Adjunct Professor
E-mail: 95gaetani@cua.edu
Phone: 202-319-5698
[NCSSS Field Education Website](#)
[NCSSS Google Drive Trainings and Resources](#)



Types of Placements

Field Education is the heart of Social Work Education at the National Catholic School of Social Service. Students in both the BSW Program and MSW Program will engage in Field work depending on their level of study.

- **Generalist Practice Placement:** completed by BSW students and first year MSW students
 - Students will be exposed to the full range of social work practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.
 - Students complete a minimum of 14 hours of field weekly from September - May, for an average of 210 hours per semester. Students must have accrued 420 hours by the end of their placement in order to satisfy this requirement.
- **Specialized Practice Placement:** completed by second year MSW students and Advanced Standing MSW students.
 - Students will complete a placement that aligns with their academic specialization (Clinical or CAPP).
 - Students complete a minimum of 16 hours of field weekly from September - May, for an average of 240 hours per semester. Students must have accrued 480 hours by the end of their placement in order to satisfy this requirement.

CSWE Core Competencies

Following are the nine Core Competencies which the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has identified as essential to all effective and ethical social work practice. The Competencies direct the curricular structure required of all accredited Social Work degree programs. The student's Learning Contract and Evaluations are based on these Core Competencies.

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

Roles in Field Education

- *Office of Field Education:* Frank Gaetani, Director of Field Education
- *Field Liaisons:* NCSSS Adjunct Faculty that serve as the bridge between the student, field agency, and school--- providing support, guidance, and evaluation throughout the placement.
- *Field Instructor:* Social Work Supervisor who provides supervision, instruction, and mentorship to the student during their time in their placement, guiding their professional development and evaluating their performance in the field.
- *Task Supervisor:* oversees the student's day-to-day tasks and learning opportunities within the agency, in collaboration with the Field Instructor.
- *Faculty Academic Advisors:* support students' academic progress through their program alongside the respective Program Chairs

Semester Check-list

Students should use this checklist as a guide throughout each semester of Field Education. To successfully complete the placement requirements, all items listed below must be fulfilled by the end of the semester.

Fall/First Semester	Spring/Second Semester
<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Initial Site Visit <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Process Recordings <input type="checkbox"/> Log of Hours documenting half of final required field hours <input type="checkbox"/> Final Field Evaluation with Passing grade <input type="checkbox"/> Seminar Assignments and Participation	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Plan Review <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up Site Visit (if indicated on Learning Plan Review) <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Process Recordings <input type="checkbox"/> Log of Hours documenting remaining half of final required field hours <input type="checkbox"/> Seminar Assignments and Participation

Expectations

- *Expectations of the Student in Field*
 - Students are expected to act with integrity, competence, and respect toward clients; maintain professional boundaries, and represent the social work profession with honesty and responsibility.
 - Students must take responsibility for their learning by attending field regularly, completing assignments on time, collaborating with field instructors, and applying theory to practice.
 - Students must communicate with field instructors and school staff, give and receive feedback, reflect on their performance, and address challenges promptly and ethically.
- *Expectations of the Agency, Field Instructor, Task Supervisor*
 - Agencies must provide structured onboarding and regular supervision by a qualified Field Instructor and, if applicable, a Task Supervisor for daily guidance.
 - Field Instructors are expected to support students in completing Learning Plans and Evaluations through scheduled individual and/or group supervision.
 - Field sites must maintain open communication with the Office of Field Education, participate in site visits as needed, and share concerns or changes impacting the student experience.
 - Agencies must align with NCSSS' mission and values, including anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion, recognizing this as an ongoing, shared learning process.
- *Expectations of the Field Liaison, Initial Site Visits, and Ongoing Communication*
 - Field Liaisons are NCSSS Adjunct Faculty that serve as the bridge between the student, field agency, and school- providing support, guidance, and evaluation throughout the placement.
 - Field Liaisons maintain contact with students and field instructors, monitor progress, and assess learning needs through scheduled visits and check-ins, especially during a student's first semester at a new placement.
 - Within first 4-6 weeks of a student's placement, they will coordinate the Initial Site Visit between the student, field instructor, field agency. During this Visit, they facilitate discussions regarding acclimation, assignments, skill development, supervision use, and personal/professional growth.
 - Successful placements depend on regular communication between the student, Field Instructor, Field Liaison, and Field Office throughout the semester to support learning and address concerns.



Safety and Security of Students

- Student safety is a shared priority among the Field Education Office, the agency, and the student. All parties must collaborate to reduce risks and ensure a safe learning environment.
- At the start of placement, students and field instructors receive safety training during mandatory orientation. Students are expected to learn and follow agency-specific safety protocols, including procedures for working with high-risk individuals.
- Agencies must provide the same safety measures to students as they do to employees. Agencies are expected to have clear, regularly reviewed safety policies and ensure students are oriented to these practices in their first week.
- If community or home visits are part of the placement, agencies must take steps to minimize risk. Field instructors are responsible for preparing students with appropriate guidelines and support. Students must seek training and follow all safety protocols.
- Any incident involving student safety must be reported immediately to the field instructor and the Field Office via a Critical Incident Form. The Director of Field Education will coordinate follow-up, which may include notifying university officials as needed.

Suggested Onboarding and Orientation Activities

1. Orient student to their workspace, phone, computer, email, and internal data systems.
2. Initiate onboarding/orientation process, including safety trainings and other relevant trainings to be reviewed and discussed with Field Instructor.
3. Review emergency, HIPAA guidelines, and other health and safety related requirements.
4. Read organization's mission statement, vision, program objectives, bylaws and contracts, and applicable laws that describe the organization's history and role in the service delivery system and larger community. Discuss how these are put into action and if they have changed over time.
5. Review organizational chart, job descriptions of social workers and other professionals in the organization. Discuss decision making policies and procedures
6. Read policies and procedures, especially related to confidentiality guidelines, harassment, discrimination, Americans with Disabilities Act and OSHA. Review and discuss procuring supplies and provisions, telephone/communication/computer utilization, parking, and mileage/travel reimbursement. Review and discuss.
7. Read organization's policies and procedures which define client eligibility for services and outline agency informed consent, confidentiality, and professional conduct. Review and discuss.
8. Review examples of assessment tools and case studies, evaluation tools, and other samples of key organizational tasks, tools, and work. Review and discuss.
9. Attend staff and other agency/program meetings. Discuss staff/agency priorities, dynamics, decision making, leadership.
10. Review expectations for supervision meetings, roles, and responsibilities. Schedule regular meeting times.
11. Review CSWE Core Competencies and NASW Code of Ethics.



Challenges in the Field Placement and Changes in, or Discharge from 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. Problem-Solving Process

- a. Step 1: The student and Field Instructor should first attempt to resolve issues through open communication.
- b. Step 2: If unresolved, the Field Liaison should be contacted to mediate. A joint conference will be held to explore concerns.
- c. Step 3: During the joint conference, an action plan will be developed that includes:
 - i. Clear identification of issues
 - ii. Learning objectives and behavior expectations
 - iii. Agreed-upon actions and timelines for review
 - iv. Possible development of a Performance Improvement Plan
- d. Step 4: If concerns persist, a Field Review will be scheduled.

2. A Field Review will be scheduled if:

- a. Issues remain unresolved after prior steps
- b. A student is struggling in placement or receives a failing field evaluation
- c. The agency raises serious concerns or seeks to terminate a student
- d. A student requests removal from a placement
- e. Other serious issues affecting the placement arise

3. Field Placement Discontinuance

- a. Changes in or early termination of a placement require careful evaluation and prior intervention efforts.
- b. Any party (student, agency, or school) may initiate this step after attempts to resolve the issue have been made.
- c. If the agency no longer provides an adequate learning environment (e.g., lack of assignments, organizational challenges), students should notify their Field Liaison promptly.
- d. If a student's performance is the cause, a Performance Improvement Plan will be created, followed by a meeting with the Director of Field Education and Program Chair to determine next steps.

4. Placement Termination and Next Steps

- a. Students are expected to terminate placement responsibilities responsibly, in collaboration with the agency and school.
- b. Re-placement is not guaranteed and depends on performance, availability, and approval from the Academic Advisor, Field Liaison, and Field Faculty.
- c. Students beginning a new placement must undergo a full orientation and allow time for adjustment.
- d. If a student is discharged from two placements, a Field Review with the Field Director, Program Chair, and Academic Advisor will determine their continuation in field education.



Attendance and Scheduling Policies

- Students cannot discontinue, terminate, end, or complete placement early or without approval from the Director of Field Education. Placements run from September through May.
- 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.
- Students are not required to attend field on days the University is closed during the Semester. Students are required to make alternate arrangements with their Field Instructors to make up hours lost on days they are not in Field on a regularly scheduled day (for sickness, University closure, etc.)

Other Program Policies

- **Malpractice and Automobile Insurance** – NCSSS Students are covered by malpractice insurance. The University does not cover auto liability – and 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)** – Students, Field Faculty, and Field Instructors, must maintain confidentiality and comply with HIPAA and site-specific health privacy policies.
- **Professional Ethics and Conduct** - 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>
- **Organizational Policies** - Students must comply with the regulations and policies of the agency. 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** - NCSSS does not require or facilitate health screenings, background checks, and/or drug screening prior to students beginning field placements. 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.
- **Field Placement Accommodations** - 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.) Phone: 202-319-5211, Fax: 202-319-5126, CUA-DSS@cua.edu
- **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. 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. 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.



NCSSS Field Education Calendar: 2025 – 2026 Academic Year

Orientations (August, 2025)

Session	Date and Time (<i>participants will receive a calendar invitation with meeting links</i>)
BSW Student Field Orientation	Tuesday, August 19, 12:00 – 1:00pm
MSW Returning Student Field Orientation	Tuesday, August 19, 4:00 – 5:00pm
Field Instructor and Agency Orientation	Wednesday, August 20, 12:00pm – 1:00pm
MSW New Student Orientation	Thursday, August 21, 1:00 – 5:00pm
Field Liaison Orientation	Friday, August 22, 11:00am – 12:00pm

Fall Semester (August – December, 2025)

Week #	Dates (Monday – Friday)	Calendar
1	8/25 – 8/29	First Week of Classes for the Fall 2025 Semester <i>Students are not required to attend field this week. Students are encouraged to use this week to finalize onboarding with their agency.</i>
2	9/1 – 9/5	First Week of Field Placements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Monday, 9/1: Labor Day Holiday. University Closed.</u> - <u>9/2 – 9/5: Students are required to begin their Field Placements this week.</u>
3	9/8 – 9/12	Initial Site Visits Occur, Learning Plans are Developed
4	9/15 – 9/19	
5	9/22- 9/26	
6	9/29 – 10/3	
7	10/6 – 10/10	
8	10/13 – 10/17	Mid-Semester Check-In <i>Field Office will check-in with Field Liaisons to gather feedback about the student experience as well as the Initial Site Visits.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Monday, 10/13 – Indigenous Peoples' Day. University Closed.</u>
9	10/20 – 10/24	Placements Continue
10	10/27 – 10/31	
11	11/3 – 11/7	Registration for Spring 2026 Semester Opens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Tuesday, 11/4: Students in SSS673 and SSS871 in the fall semester must register for SSS674 and SSS872 respectively in order to continue in their placement and receive field education credit for the Spring. Students must register with the same Instructor unless prior approval from the Director of Field Education is granted.</u>
12	11/10 – 11/14	Placements Continue
13	11/17 – 11/21	
14	11/24 – 11/28	Thanksgiving Recess <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Wednesday 11/26 – Friday 11/28: University Closed.</u>
15	12/1 – 12/5	Last Week of Classes



		<i>Preparations for end of fall semester should begin. Last day of classes is Saturday, 12/6.</i>
16	12/8 – 12/12	Last Required Week of Field for the Fall 2025 Semester <i>Log of Hours and Field Evaluations are due to Field Liaisons this week, no later than Friday, 12/12.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Monday, 12/8</u> – Feast of Immaculate Conception: <i>University Closed.</i>
17	12/15 – 12/19	Optional Week of Field for Students who may be behind in hours <i>Students who have not reached the minimum halfway point of hours for their placements should make arrangements to attend field this week to catch-up on hours.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Tuesday 12/16</u>: Final grades are due by 3:00pm.

Fall Semester to Spring Semester Transition	
Monday, December 22, 2025 – Friday, January 2, 2026	Winter Recess – University Closed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Students may not attend field during this period, without prior authorization from the Director of Field Education. Students are required to discuss this break with their Field Instructors in advance to ensure field related assignments and client coverage is arranged during the break.</i>

Spring Semester (January – May, 2026)

Week #	Dates (Monday – Friday)	Calendar
1	1/12 – 1/16	First Week of Classes for the Spring 2026 Semester. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Field Placements Resume.</i> - <i>Placement Cycle for the 2026 – 2027 Academic Year begins.</i>
2	1/19 – 1/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Monday, 1/19</u> – Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day – <i>University Closed.</i> - <u>Friday, 1/23</u> – <i>Last day to register for classes and drop regular courses.</i>
3	1/26 – 1/30	Students continue in placements. Students and Field Instructors complete Learning Plan Review and conduct Follow-up Site Visits with Field Liaisons as needed.
4	2/2 – 2/6	
5	2/9 – 2/13	
6	2/16 – 2/20	
7	2/23 – 2/27	
8	3/2 – 3/6	Mid-Semester Check-in <i>Field Office will check-in with Field Liaisons to gather feedback.</i>
9	3/9 – 3/13	Spring Recess – No On-Campus Classes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>University is NOT closed, field placements resume. Students may request this week off from field placement with sufficient notice to their Field Instructors.</i>
10	3/16 – 3/20	Classes resume. Placements Continue.
11	3/23 – 3/27	
12	3/30 – 4/3	Easter Recess



		- <u>Thursday 4/2 – Monday 4/6: University Closed.</u>
13	4/6 – 4/10	- <u>Tuesday, 4/7: Classes resume.</u> - Placements continue.
14	4/13 – 4/17	- <u>Wednesday, 4/15: University Research Day. No classes.</u>
15	4/20 – 4/24	Placements Continue
16	4/27 – 5/1	Last Week of Classes and Last Required Week of Field - <i>Students should begin submitting Log of Hours and Field Evaluations to their Field Liaisons.</i>
17	5/4 – 5/8	Optional Week of Field for students who may be behind on hours. - <i>Students who have not reached the minimum required Field Hours (420 for Generalist Students, 480 Specialized Practice Students) must continue in Field this week.</i> - <i>Log of Hours and Field Evaluations are due to Field Liaisons this week, no later than Friday, 5/8.</i>
18	5/11 – 5/15	- <u>Monday, 5/11: grades are due for graduating students by noon.</u> - <u>Tuesday, 5/12: grades are due for non-graduating students by noon.</u>
Class of 2026 Commencement: Saturday, May 16, 2026		<i>Degree conferral for undergraduate and graduate students completing degree requirements in the Spring 2026 Semester.</i>

Field Schedule Reminders

- Students should review the Field Calendar with their Field Instructors at the start of each semester.
- Students are not required to attend field on days the University is closed during the Semester.
- Students are required to make alternate arrangements with their Field Instructors to make up hours lost on days they are not in Field on a regularly scheduled day (for sickness, University closure, etc.)
- Students may not attend Field during the Winter Recess (12/22 – 1/2) without prior approval from the Director of Field Education.
- On Administrative Mondays or Reading Days, students should discuss with their field instructor if this will affect their field schedule, and identify a plan with notice to make up the hours.
- Students are required to make alternate arrangements with their Field Instructors to make up hours lost on days they are not in Field on a regularly scheduled day.
- **Any adjustments to a student's determined Field Schedule require discussion and final approval by the Field Instructor.**
- More information on the NCSSS Field Education Policies on Absences, Scheduling, and the Field Calendar, can be found on page 18 and 19 of the Field Education Manual.



Conclusion

This Welcome Packet is meant to be a concise overview of the key information required to support Students, Field Instructors, Agency Partners, and Field Liaison, throughout Field Education. For more information on policies, procedures, and guidelines, [please visit the NCSSS Field Education Manual which can be found at this link.](#)

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 Resources and materials to enhance the field placement experience. [These materials can be accessed via the following link.](#)

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,

Frank Gaetani, MSW LMSW

Director of Field Education and Adjunct Professor

E-mail: 95gaetani@cua.edu

Phone: 202-319-5698

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