Required Reading – 2nd Field Placement (Advanced Concentration)

Congratulations! You have completed your first field assignment and are now preparing for your advanced concentration field placement. You are aware of the field standards, but there are unique circumstances that come with planning for the advanced concentration field placement. The information below addresses some frequently asked questions by students going into advanced concentration (AC) field. More details will be provided at upcoming 2nd Field (AC) Information Sessions.

Field Assignments
Students are given some autonomy to search independently for their AC field placements. If you are eligible for AC Field, you will have to complete a Letter of Intent (on the Field Education website), which informs of your plans to find your own placement or to request that the Field Education Office find a placement for you.

The Field Office maintains a database of field sites that have met the qualifications for approved field placements. Students are able to search for field placements during the spring semester, and the database is usually accessible after the annual Field and Career Fair. The Annual Field and Career Fair is an excellent starting point for your initial search. The Fair brings together, in one place, many agencies around the Capital Region that are seeking students for field placements each year. To minimize the disruption of having to respond to multiple inquiries, agencies use the Fair as an opportunity to meet and interview students. As a result, students are specifically asked NOT to begin making field inquiries before the annual Field and Career Fair. Students are encouraged to primarily consider field agencies that have already been approved for placement by the Field Office.

Students are responsible for setting up their pre-placement interviews. During this process, you may interview with multiple agencies before selecting a placement for AC Field. As a result, you are required to complete a Closure Contact Form (on the Field Education website) that lists all of the agencies with whom you’ve made contact. The Closure Contact Form helps you keep track of your agency contacts and ensures that proper closure occurred for sites you have not selected. Once you and the field instructor decide on a match, you both must complete and sign the MSW Field Verification Form.

In order to register for Field III (RSSW 752) a permission number has to be issued by the Field Office. In order to receive a permission number, the MSW Field Verification Form and Closure Contact Form must be submitted to the Field Office. You must also meet all requirements for Field I and II and have received a satisfactory grade. Delaying the submission of the required forms and not completing requirements for Field I and II will consequently delay your ability to register for Field III. This may result in you being charged a late fee.

After you begin your field placement, you and your field instructor will develop a written learning plan for your placement. The Learning Agreement is usually due about two weeks into your placement and should summarize key learning objectives that align with the skills outlined in the evaluations (see “Evaluations” section below).
Placement Options
Students may qualify for specialized placement options. Some examples include: The Internships in Aging Project, Innovations in Mental Health, Block placements and Work Study (see detailed information about the requirements for these options on the Field Education website).

Semesters Required
Students remain at a single site for an entire academic year. In order to receive credit for field, you must successfully complete both semesters of the AC field sequence without interruption. Students must be registered for Field III and IV (RSSW 752 and 753).

Attendance Requirements
Students are expected to be in field two full days per week. Field days are typically Thursdays and Fridays. This continuity in scheduling is important for student learning, agency operations and consistency of client care. The field schedule also coincides with your class schedule each semester. The Calendar for AC Field Placement provides specific dates for field, the number of days required and the start/end dates for field in the Fall and Spring. There are different calendars for specialized field placements, and the schedules are made available to students selected for those placements. The Field Office provides an attendance sheet that must be filled out and signed by both you and your field instructor at the end of each semester. Please note that the vast majority of field sites DO NOT offer quality and consistent educational opportunities during evenings and weekends. Because appropriate social work supervision is required during field days, requests for evening and weekend hours, when social work supervision is generally not available, are usually not approved. This factor may have particular significance for part-time degree students, so planning for Field Education requirements is necessary when considering the MSW degree program.

Registering for Field III and IV (RSSW 752 and 753)
After receiving your completed Field Verification Form and Closure Contact form, the Field Office will wait until all requirements are fulfilled for Field I and II (and a final grade of Satisfactory is earned) before issuing you a permission number to add Field III for the Fall semester. In order to start Field III in the Fall, students register for RSSW 752 prior to the beginning of the fall semester. A permission number is not needed to register for Field IV, as long as it is taken in the advanced-concentration sequence of coursework (Spring semester).

Grades for Field:
Similar to 1st Field (Generalist Practicum) grading, AC Field is a two-semester course in which students receive an “I” Incomplete at the end of the Fall semester. Upon completion of both semesters (RSSW 752 and 753), students will receive a final grade of “S” Satisfactory or “U” Unsatisfactory. Students must perform satisfactorily in field in order to remain in the MSW program and receive degree clearance.
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Field Liaisons
Students are assigned to a field liaison each year. Field liaisons provide a variety of supportive services designed to create cohesive working relationships between students and their field instructors. Students meet with their liaisons a minimum of once per semester and can contact them anytime regarding issues in field. There is no field seminar for AC field.

Agency Background Checks
Some human service organizations have strict security standards for staff and students working with certain populations. Background checks and finger printing may be required to qualify for an assigned field placement. When these procedures are required, students are responsible for meeting those requirements prior to starting field. The cost of such procedures can be underwritten by the Field Fee. Students for whom background checks could be an obstacle to placement in field should seek guidance from the Director of Field Education early in the process.

Medical Clearance
Some agencies may require that students provide medical information and obtain health-related clearance for work with their clients. It is the student’s responsibility to achieve medical clearance by the agency in a timely manner. Failure to provide medical clearance information may delay the start of field and, consequently, extend the time for completing field at the end of the academic year.

Evaluations
There are three evaluation periods within an academic year. Scoring is based on demonstrated competence of advance social work practice skills. Detailed information will be provided about the evaluation process at the AC Field Information Sessions. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that completed evaluations are handed in to the Field Office when due.

Timely Submission of Field Paperwork
It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that field paperwork is submitted when due. Failure to meet deadlines in field may result in delays in the field registration process and completion of field requirements; these events could impact degree clearance.

SSW Standards for Social Work Education
The School of Social Welfare has in place Standards for Social Work Education that provides essential guidance to students about field and the overall academic program. It is important that you carefully review and adhere to these standards (provided at Orientation and also available upon request).